



No. XIX]

Contents

[MAY 1884

Jack's Courtship: a Sailor's Yarn of Love and Shipwreck. Chapters XX-XXII. I
By W. CLARK RUSSELL

French and English Towns 31
By EDWARD A. FREEMAN, LL.D, D.C.L.

Grey Tower of Dalmeny 47
By GEORGE MILNER, Author of 'Country Pleasures'

My Paris Masters 48
By the AUTHOR OF 'REATA'

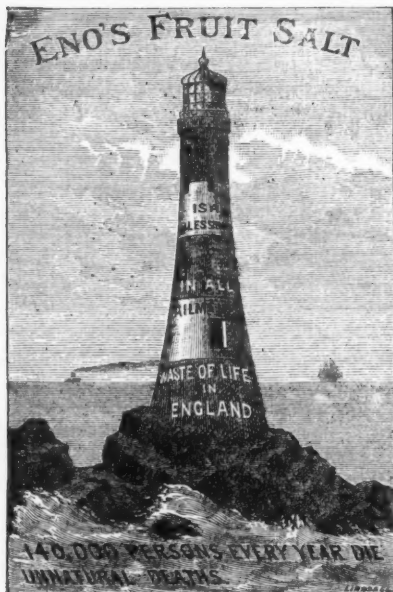
Old Mortality 74
By ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Madam. Chapters XXI.-XXV. 82
By MRS. OLIPHANT

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CONTENTS.

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| II. Stephen's History of the Criminal Law. | VII. The Unity of Nature by the Duke of Argyll. |
| III. The Chronicle of James I. of Aragon. | VIII. Sayce's Herodotus. |
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| V. The Scottish Universities. | |

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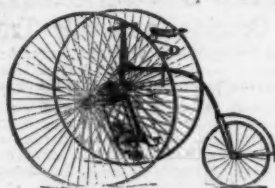
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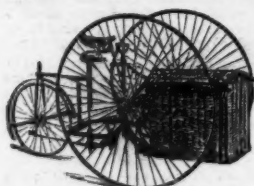
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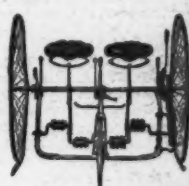
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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
JACK'S COURTSHIP: A SAILOR'S YARN OF LOVE AND SHIPWRECK. By W. CLARK RUSSELL	I
Chapter XX.—Night in the River.	
„ XXI.—Mr. Morecombe is Sea-sick.	
„ XXII.—With my Love.	
FRENCH AND ENGLISH TOWNS. By EDWARD A. FREEMAN, LL.D., D.C.L.	31
GREY TOWER OF DALMENY. By GEORGE MILNER, Author of 'Country Pleasures'	47
MY PARIS MASTERS. By the AUTHOR OF 'REATA'	48
OLD MORTALITY. By ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON	74
MADAM. Chapters XXI.-XXV. By MRS. OLIPHANT	82

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MAY 1884.

Jack's Courtship:

A SAILOR'S YARN OF LOVE AND SHIPWRECK.

BY W. CLARK RUSSELL.

CHAPTER XX.

NIGHT IN THE RIVER.

I COULD not help wondering at my impudence in thrusting my love business on the mind of a sea captain, full of the responsibility of a big ship crowded with passengers and loaded down to her chain-plate bolts with valuable merchandise. However, I had calculated upon his help and was not going to be cheated out of it; and, besides, there would be a freemasonry between us which few landsmen could fully understand. We had been old shipmates, had had many a frolic together ashore under southern and eastern skies, were fast friends whilst professionally associated, and consequently he would act and speak before me privately without any of the reserve he would think necessary to maintain for the preservation of his dignity in the presence of others. What sort of captain he made I could not yet tell, but I remembered him as a smart, exceedingly intelligent seaman as second mate; a man who had made his position by hard work and close attention to his duties; who, if he had not crept aboard through the hawsepipe, had not gained admittance by the cabin window, but as apprentice, had worked his way up out of the slush-pot into command of one of the finest ships which then traded to Australia.

Lunch was on the table and I went into the cuddy to take my first meal aboard the *Strathmore*. Only two or three of the passengers came to the table, among them being Captain Jackson.

He talked in a loud voice to Thompson, who sat at the head of the table; and I remember the navy man inquiring if the ship was not uncommonly deep in the water, to which Thompson replied that her height of side was an inch more than she had last voyage.

'Well,' says Captain Jackson, 'it's my ignorance of merchant vessels that makes me ask the question. I was brought up in frigates and line-of-battle ships, sir, and am used to a dip of twenty feet, and when I required to judge our pace of sailing by looking over the side, I had to peer a long way down before I came to water.'

'You're going to alter all that in the navy, I hear,' says Thompson; 'hulls are to be flush with the water, aren't they? and nothing's to show but the things you point your guns out of?'

'Oh,' cried Captain Jackson scornfully, 'what's going to be altered in the navy I am sure I don't know. I'm sorry, but I can't help the change, sir. Iron and steam are the curse of the country, sir; they have robbed us of our ships and of our sailors. What's a man of war in these times? An immense floating kettle, sir, with fire inside it and steam blowing out of the spout; and how can they call the men who man those monstrous utensils sailors? What could Nelson have done with a parcel of fellows brought up in floating saucepans, where there are no yards to brace about, where a bolt of canvas would furnish all the sail needed, and where the helm is worked by a steam engine?'

Thompson tipped me a wink as the prejudiced old fellow stopped his chatter by filling his mouth. This specimen of the gallant captain's opinions made me glad to think that he was to be one of us, as I might reckon upon a deal of amusement. No humourist equals the man who passes his closing years in pointing to the past with one hand and pulling the nose of the present with the other, and I never tire of hearing such people and encouraging them to talk.

He began again about the *Strathmore* being overloaded, and his wife, a large stout lady with a cast in her port eye, who sat next him, said she was sorry to hear that he had misgivings on that subject, for nobody could imagine how deeply her husband was versed in all nautical matters, being the author not only of a marine dictionary, but of a work on the management of boats at sea. On this the Irish lady, Mrs. O'Brien, who was seated near Thompson, said to him, 'Captain, if the gentleman knows all about it and says the ship is too deep, then she must be unsafe, and I hope ye'll have her lightened before we get among the waves, which they tell me roll mountains high in the Bay of Biscay.'

How Daniel eased their minds I don't know, for, having finished lunch and suspecting that Gravesend would not be far off, I left the table and went on deck to look about me, thinking as I mounted the companion-steps, and hearing my friend blandly

jabbering about free-board and tonnage (soul-sickening subjects), that the old navy man would give him some trouble with his prejudices if he did not mind his eye.

It was half-past one or later yet, and we were in Northfleet Hope, as the stretch of water betwixt Grays and Tilburyness is called, and by squinting over the port bow I could see where Gravesend lay by the colour of the sky there. The wind had freshened and the water was trembling and running in a stress of little waves under it; the smoke from the tug's funnel fled away flat from the orifice and blew down upon the water; a couple of yachts with the tacks of their mainsails triced up were passing us in a smother of foam, through which their greenish copper flashed like a shark's body in the boiling and seething white of a ship's wake; an old black collier, with the clews of her square foresail stretched on a boom, was staggering along within pistol-shot of a lovely slope of mud on the Tilbury side; and a tug was dragging a fine Yankee barque up the river, hands aloft unbending the sails, and the stripes and stars making a brilliant spot of colour against the sky, under which a flight of windy-looking clouds were speeding with a ragged look in their tails as if they had been torn out of some solid body of vapour that would not be long in coming.

Now that Gravesend was almost within hail I grew desperately nervous and agitated, and seemed to realise with a deeper sense of it than had yet come to me the resolution old Hawke was illustrating by his stratagem of sending Florence and Morecombe away together on a long voyage. Evidently my cousins were perfectly right when they had said that the young fellow was not to be got rid of by a plain refusal. The worry in me was rendered livelier by my anxiety to make sure that the man who was to share my cabin was the fellow I feared he would prove. I stood watching the passing shore as we opened Gravesend Reach, and then presently the old town which I knew so well as a point of departure and arrival—for I had always sailed out of the port of London—hove in view, its bits of piers forking out into a squadron of wherries that danced around them, and I saw the windows of the Falcon Hotel sparkling in the light (may be Florence was at that moment watching the approaching ship from one of them, and it was her eyes I mistook for the sunshine in the window panes), and the lumber of houses that huddled close to the river's edge; while far away down the Hope, shining like marble in the fitful radiance of the cloud-swept sun, were the white heights of Cliffe, crowning the visible confines of a stretch of water that was full at that hour of shipping, at rest or under way, and gay with the windy streaming of scores of flags.

It was three o'clock by the time the ship was moored to a buoy, very nearly abreast of Gravesend, and, armed with a pipe and a small but powerful telescope of my own, I went forward on to the forecastle, where I could watch the passengers come aboard

without being noticed myself. There was a squally look in the sky, and it was blowing a fresh north-east wind with an edge of winter in it that made the pilot cloth coat I wore a very acceptable garment. The women and children on the main deck, and the rather squalid-looking gentry who paced the forecastle or hung about the galley for the warmth and shelter down there, gave, I am bound to say, a somewhat slum-like look to the ship in that part of her which they were permitted to use. But when I glanced at the clear quarter-deck, with the shining windows in the cuddy front and the brasswork and painting there, then at the long sweep of poop which ran with a very clear white surface into the sky that was pouring past in clouds, and then turned my eyes aloft where the house flag, dwarfed by height, was rattling like a peal of musketry at the main royal masthead, and looked at the grand spread of yards, and noticed the frigate-like pose of the masts, stayed to a hair, every sail with a bunt as smooth as a pillow, the ratlines ruling the shrouds as straight and square as the shear poles, all the braces hauled taut, and the wind giving a curve to every slack line it met and rushing away out of the top-mast rigging with a kind of angry hiss in its wild humming, I thought that if Florence was viewing the *Strathmore* from yonder hotel or any other land point, she would be thinking her a noble-looking craft for her class and character, and not the less fitted to ride the stormy seas of the Atlantic and Southern Oceans because Captain Jackson, R.N., found her deeper than he thought good.

Well, mates, after I had been keeping a look-out for about twenty minutes I spied a boat shove off from the steps behind the pier, and bringing my glass to bear I noticed that the waterman headed for us and that there was a man sitting in the sternsheets. I kept the little telescope upon this last, and presently made out a large moustache, a white billycock, an eye-glass, stick-up collar, and a figure dressed in a grey coat with a cape, and a rug over his arm and a black portmanteau alongside of him. I had only seen Mr. Morecombe once, as you know, but the moment my glass gave me the face of the fellow in the sternsheets of that boat so that I could clearly see the features of it, all doubts as to the man who was to share my cabin vanished. Reginald Morecombe it was as certain as that it was I who was watching him. The name on the luggage below ought to have convinced me, but though I had been pretty sure I was not so sure as I was now, and such was the effect of this confirmatory and conclusive evidence upon me that, though God knows I should have reckoned myself in anything but a merry mood, I burst into a wild laugh, shaken to the heart by the absurdity of us two taking this voyage for the same purpose, coming together without the least suspicion of each other's intention, and actually sharing the same cabin, and sleeping one atop of the other!

However, if there was any comfort at all to be got out of the fact of this man coming aboard it lay in his arriving alone, for that looked to me very much as if Florence knew nothing of the plot that had been devised, and I might count upon good results following her disgust if it turned out that she was ignorant of the conspiracy between Hawke and Aunt Damaris and Morecombe. I went on to the quarter-deck as his boat sheered alongside, and watched him come up the gangway ladder. He knew very little about ships, I took it, and was boarding the *Strathmore* for the first time I suspected by the way he halted and stared, as if he didn't know which end of the vessel belonged to him; and I dare say he would be puzzled by the crowd of 'tween-deck passengers who stood by to see him arrive and by the appearance of the maindeck, which with its rows of scuttle-butts, spare booms, hatchway gratings, coils of rigging upon pins, and the dirt and confusion which third-class passengers have a happy knack in bringing along with them as a part of their luggage, must have presented to the entirely shore-going eye a very complicated appearance.

He paid the waterman and took up his bag, and seeing him looking around in quest of someone to inform him what was next to be done, I stepped up to him and said, 'Excuse me, sir; are you Mr. Reginald Morecombe?'

He bowed and said 'Yaas,' and looked at me gladly as if thankful to heaven that someone knew him amid this wilderness of ropes, live-stock, and frowsy passengers.

'It was a mere conjecture of mine,' said I. 'A Mr. Reginald Morecombe is to share my cabin, and if you are the gentleman, I shall be happy to show you where it is.'

'Oh, thur-thur-ank you, thank you,' said he with his stammer, following me. 'How deyvelish confusing a ship is. This vessel looks vewy dirty. Who are all those fellabs outside?' meaning the people on the main deck, for we were now in the cuddy.

'Tween-deck passengers,' said I. 'This is the cabin we are to share,'—bundling into it. 'I found these traps in the lower bunk and supposed you had chosen it. But top or bottom is the same to me. You can have which you like.'

He peered with his glass in his eye and said, 'Oh, thur-thur-anks; I think the under one will suit me best. I am a wetched sailaw,' grinning palely, 'and the one beneath is the easiest to enter. What vewy queear beds for fellahs to lie in! But I suppose a man gets used to this sort of thing in time.'

I was in the act of leaving the cabin, being anxious to watch for the arrival of Florence and her aunt, when he said, pulling his moustaches and smiling with tremendous politeness, 'I baig your pardon, as we are to be companions in this—aw—this woom, might I be allowed to ask your name?'

I was within an ace of answering that it was Seymour—the word was trembling on my lips when I suddenly remembered, and stammered, ‘John Egerton—Mr. John Egerton. You’ll see it on that box there,’ and I swung hastily out into the cuddy that he might not see the conscience-stricken look which I could feel as hot as fire in my face. I stopped a moment to pull out the letter I had addressed to my uncle and scribbled with a pencil the following postscript: ‘The Reginald Morecombe who is to share my cabin is *Mr. Hawke’s young friend*. Endeavour to let the old man know as early as possible that I am accompanying his daughter to Australia. I want to have the full benefit of his fears and rage, and the sooner he is told the longer he will suffer. Would any man have conceived the pompous old chap capable of such an underhand stroke as this? God bless you all.’ This being written, I closed the envelope, and gave the letter to one of the stewards to put into the bag which would be cleared or sent ashore before the ship sailed, and then went on to the main deck in order to take another spell of watching on the forecastle, but just as I was stepping out of the cuddy some people came over the gangway, the sight of whom sent me backing and cowering under the starboard poop ladder for fear that Florence might be among the party. They proved to be five cuddy passengers, and when I found that my darling was not one of them I made my way to the forecastle and resumed my seat there.

You will have seen, my lads, that much had not passed between Mr. Morecombe and myself; but little as it was, there was enough of it to convince me that my relatives were perfectly right in saying that the man was a fool. I may make his words look as much like his pronunciation of them as I can; but there’s no art that I’m master of to represent the dawdling, affected tone of his voice, the foolishness of his smile, the astounding good opinion of himself that he managed somehow to convey. Part and parcel of the man his conceit must have been to strike me as it did at a time when he was so bothered by the novelty of his surroundings that even an actor would have been natural under the circumstances. Not that I found him less good looking than I thought him that day when I caught a glimpse of him at Bristol seated in old Hawke’s carriage; but for all that, the few sentences he had let fall, and above everything his smile, persuaded me that there was a world of truth in what my aunt had told me about his good looks disappearing in his stupidity when you got close to him in talk; and when I thought of how Florence had spoken of him as a fool, and remembered that she had refused his offer of marriage, why, I began to consider that after all perhaps nothing better could have happened for me than that Morecombe should have fallen into Hawke’s scheme (for

Hawke's it was, if it was not the devil's), since what was more likely to complete her disgust of the young fellow than being placed in the one situation of all others in which she would be unable to keep clear of his unwelcome company unless she imprisoned herself in her cabin?

Full of these agreeable reflections, I sat with a grin upon my face poising my telescope ready to level it at the first boat that should come away from Gravesend. The wind was strong and cold; no rain had fallen as yet, but the clouds were full of wet and I guessed that we should have a soppy night. Only a few of the crew were about, the rest being, as I might suppose from experience, too drunk to be of use. I was near the scuttle and could hear the fellows jabbering and breaking into songs that sounded as if all hands were sea-sick. Queer it was to me to feel as I looked around me and spied the first mate stumping the break of the poop athwartships, an ordinary seaman in the maintop at work on some job up there, the second mate in the waist singing out to a hand in the foretopmast crosstrees, and so on, that I had nothing to do with the ship, could go where I liked, use the weather side of the poop whenever I chose, and enjoy more liberty than even my friend Daniel. I suppose most men who have knocked off the sea as a profession have felt what I am describing when they have taken a voyage as passenger whilst their memory of sea discipline and work was fresh.

At last I began to get rather tired of the *Strathmore's* fore-castle, and above all of the wind that was whistling nippingly into my starboard ear, and was wondering if it was to fall dark before Florence and her aunt came aboard. As I was in the act of rising to stretch my legs and take a final squint at the flight of steps near the pier before going aft, I spied a boat draw out from the other wherries. I waited, but would not seem to look too inquisitively, for just then I noticed young Morecombe posted near the port-quarter boat holding the ship's telescope—which he would have found on brackets under the companion hood—with his face turned my way. Presently he rested the glass on the rail and aimed it at the approaching boat; this was my chance to take a hurried squint myself, and the moment the faces of the persons in the sternsheets of the boat entered the field of the lenses my heart gave a mighty throb. Ay, boys, she was coming at last! I had seen her darling face, the trembling of the feather of her hat in the strong wind, and thrusting the little telescope into my pocket, I went and posted myself before—or as landmen might say *behind*—the fore-castle capstan, so that it might screen me from observation as she came over the side.

Morecombe had made her out, too, by this time, and after looking at the boat through his eyeglass for a few moments, he turned tail and disappeared down the companion steps. I looked

to see him reappear on the main deck, making sure he would receive the ladies, but he did not show up again. His manner of leaving the deck suggested to me that he was doing precisely what I was—hiding. But I did not give the matter very much thought, being fully occupied in watching the boat, whose approach filled me with extraordinary agitation and excitement. If ever a fear had risen in me that something might, at the last moment, stop my pet from coming, it was ended now. There she was, nearing the ship as fast as a couple of watermen could row her; in a few minutes she would be in the vessel, for many a long week to be my adorable shipmate; no more need of twopenny lodgings, of imploring Sophie's help, of day after day passing without giving me a sight of her. No wonder my heart beat fast and rapturously. I had attempted a bold adventure, but so far all had gone as if ordered by my own wishes; and now my darling and I were to be together until Australia was reached; and of what was to follow then I had so little doubt, that had she been coming to me now as my bride my spirits could not have been more triumphantly joyous.

The wind had raised a middling stiff wobble on the water, and the boat jumped and tumbled in a very lively manner as she came along. Every moment the spray would fly over her like a hatfull of feathers tossed on the breeze, and I would notice Aunt Damaris, who, of course, would be Florence's companion, duck and curtsey as the shower blew along. She wore a thick greyish-coloured veil and a hat resembling a man's wideawake, and as I watched her bobbing in the sternsheets of that boat I thought to myself, 'What would be your ideas, my old beauty, were you to know whose eyes were gazing at you from the *Strathmore's* fore-castle?' Presently the boat came alongside, and in a few moments Florence and her aunt stepped over the gangway and immediately went into the cuddy, followed by one of the under-stewards with an armful of odds and ends belonging to them. I went on to the main deck and posted myself between the foremast and the galley, out of sight of the poop and quarter-deck, whilst I considered what I had best do. I had made up my mind not to let Florence see me until the news of my being aboard had been given her by Thompson (who by the way had gone ashore). I was not going to run risks. It was not for a moment to be doubted that if Aunt Damaris got to know I was in the *Strathmore* she would abandon the voyage by that vessel and carry Florence away, with Morecombe, of course, in their wake. Consequently, even Florence herself ought not to know that I was to be one of the vessel's passengers until we were well afloat and the nearest port a long distance astern.

These being my considerations, I stood debating what I should do. I had no excuse to stick to my cabin for the rest of

the afternoon and evening, for we were not at sea, and I could not sham sickness, nor, indeed, did I relish the notion of a long spell of solitary confinement. Dinner would be served at half-past five or six, and of course I could not take my place at the table. My best plan clearly was not to go aft at all until it was time to turn in, at which hour I might take it Florence and her aunt would have stowed themselves away in their cabin. I had half a mind to walk into the forecastle and see if there were any faces about that I remembered, and then reflecting that there was rather too much drunkenness there to make a visit agreeable, I was turning my attention to the 'tween-decks and planning a voyage into those regions for the shelter of them and the secure hiding place they would make for me, when my eye caught sight of a figure in the boatswain's berth sitting upon a chest and drinking tea out of a pannikin which he held in one hand whilst he flourished a lump of soft tack in the other. This berth or cabin was bulk-headed off from the rest of the forecastle and formed a kind of wing on the portside of the deck, a corresponding structure facing it on the starboard side. The boatswain and carpenter of the *Portia* had shared a similar bedroom in that ship, and the same arrangement would be found, I supposed, in this sister vessel. I stepped over to the door of this cabin, meaning to ask the man, whoever he might be, if he knew at what hour we were to get under way in the morning, when, struck by his appearance, I looked at him attentively and exclaimed, 'What, Jimmy Shilling! After all these years—still alive oh! Surely you remember me!'

He took a kind of slow long look at me over his pannikin and then put it down and stood up. 'Mr. Seymour!' he exclaimed. 'Well, I'm blowed! how are you, sir?'

This man had been boatswain's mate in the *Portia*, and four years ago he had looked ten years younger than he did now, so scurvily does the sea use her children; but his grizzled beard, the weather-ploughed look of his leathery skin, and the knots which hauling and pulling and swearing and piping had tied up around his eyes and over his temples did not disguise him from me. I gave him a hearty handshake and sat down, bidding him not mind me, but to go on with his supper, or whatever the snack he was working at might be styled.

At that moment in steps the carpenter, a hairy, wiry sea-dog, with a beard like a worn-out scrubbing-brush upon his chin, and strange pale eyes, as if they had lost their colour by looking too much to windward in wet weather. The boatswain politely introduced me to him, whereupon he pulled off his fur cap as a salutation, and pitched it into his bunk, and then hauling forth a short black pipe from his breeches pocket, he filled it out of a well-worn brass box, and began very gravely to smoke.

'You don't mean to say, Mr. Seymour,' said the boatswain, 'that you've come to sea again?'

'No, Shilling,' said I, 'not as a sailor man. I'm going to Australia along with you—as the old chantey says, "I've embarked into a ship which her topsails is let fall, and all unto an ileyand where we never will go home," but not to soil my hands with your filthy grease and tar. No, Shilling; no more keeping a look-out, no more hauling and slaving for this child. You may pipe your whistle and be hanged; you'll never get me to dance to it. I'm a cuddy passenger, my lively hearty, taking a sail round what the negro calls dis circumnabular globe for the fun of watching others do what I've had to do myself, and don't mean to do again.'

The carpenter grinned broadly behind his pipe, and the boatswain exclaimed, 'Cuddy passenger, eh? Shingles,' addressing the carpenter, 'ain't the cuddy a place under the poop where the ladies live, and where ye may find by looking nothing but fust-class eatin' knocking about.'

'If it ain't there, it ain't forrards,' answered the carpenter; 'leastways in this vessel.'

'And a good job too,' said I. 'Mr. Shingles, would you have ladies to live among the drunken Dutchmen you may hear snorting like hogs, if you'll put your ear to the fore-*scuttle*.'

'You're right, Mr. Seymour,' exclaimed the boatswain. 'Hogs they are, and it's animals after that there pattern to which sailors have reduced themselves. Sailors do I call 'em! Why, I'd swallow that pannikin, Shingles—bolt it afore ye whilst you sit looking on—if out of this ship's company ye'll be able to pick me one man that hasn't more to learn of his calling than an apprentice, when I first went to sea, would ha' needed teaching after he had been six months sailing.'

'Right you are, mate,' replied the carpenter, smoking thoughtfully; 'but there's no use grumbling. A man must take things as they come. If ye can't get first-class seamen, then ye must put up with middlin' sailors; and if *they're* not to be got, then ye must be content with sojers and scaramouches and turnpike men. My argument is, what's the use of cussin' and swearin'? Will you have a pipe of tobacco, Mr. Seymour, sir?' and he fumbled about for his brass box.

I took a pinch for company's sake and put it into my pipe, and then all at once bethinking myself that these fellows were calling me Mr. Seymour—and, mind you, in no uncertain notes, for the boatswain had the most roaring voice that ever human being used in calling upon sailors to quit their beds of down and mount the masts, whilst there was the true deep-sea rumble in the carpenter's pipes—I said, 'Jimmy, and you, Mr. Shingles, my name aboard the *Strathmore* is not Seymour but Egerton.

Will you try to think of that, my friends? There are some passengers aft who mustn't on any account know I'm here. And they can only find out that I *am* here, even when I am sitting among them, and they are looking at me, by learning my name. So I'm Mr. Egerton, Jimmy, and you, Mr. Shingles; and in some second dog-watch, when everything's quiet aloft and the sailors are at prayers, I'll tell you why I've come to sea in your ship, and give you both such a yarn that you'll never afterwards want to use curling-irons for your hair again so long as you live.'

'All right, sir,' said the boatswain; 'Hegerton's the word, and Hegerton it is.'

'Same here,' warbled Chips.

Note in this the beautiful gentlemanly spirit of the sailor. Had a landsman heard me say that I had changed my name, then—unless I had explained that property was the cause—he would straightway have suspected me of arson, forgery, or murder, and that I was flying to Australia to escape British justice. On the other hand, these two shell-backs asked no questions, suspected nothing, simply said 'Hegerton it is,' and so made an end of the matter. Having gone so far with them, I thought I would go farther yet, and I told them that as my friend Daniel Thompson, their skipper, was ashore, and unable therefore to let a certain passenger know that I was in the ship, and as I did not want to meet that passenger until she had been informed that I was aboard, I desired to keep forward, or somewhere out of sight, until bedtime, and asked leave to use their cabin.

'To be sure you may, Mr. *Hegerton*,' said the boatswain, with a grin, as he put a gale of wind into the aspirate to let me know how completely he had mastered the word; 'and if ye'd like to sleep here, there's my bunk and welcome.'

This hospitable offer I declined, but I told him if he'd get me a pannikin of tea from the galley, and a piece of bread, I should feel very much obliged to him, and these things he at once procured; so that, seated on his chest, with the fumes of the strong cavendish cake-tobacco that sailors smoke mingling in my nostrils with the steam of the galley tea, and the wind making a rushing noise in the rigging outside, I felt as if I were once more a sailor, and only waiting for the order to turn to to bundle out with the others and fall to work. I had a pleasant talk with these men about the ship and the skipper (whom they had both sailed with before, and spoke of in high terms), and amongst us we revived some old and pleasant memories; and then, having duties to attend to on deck, they left me alone. It was now raining, with a promise of a dark foul night, and the wind was screeching in squalls overhead. I poked my nose out and looked along the decks; a couple of brass-bound apprentices (the *Strathmore* carried five of these 'young gentlemen') were lurking about the

head of one of the poop ladders, swathed in oilskins, and the second mate, similarly attired, was rambling about in solitary dignity in the neighbourhood of the wheel. Not one of the passengers of any description was to be seen; and the deserted dark wet decks, the rain flying in clouds of drizzle past the masts, the streaming rigging, and the gloomy sky, which the shadow of the approaching night was fast darkening, made a truly miserable and depressing picture. I wondered what Morecombe was doing; whether he was with Aunt Damaris and Florence. But there was no use wondering. My present business was to kill the evening, and so I lighted a pipe, and on looking at the carpenter's bunk spied a book at the foot of it which proved to be a collection of tales of shipwreck, and several of these yarns I read to the hoarse accompaniment of the wind groaning and roaring outside.

The dinner bell rang, the evening gathered, and, by and by, on taking another look aft, I saw the cuddy lamps alight, and the passengers eating their first dinner aboard the *Strathmore*. It was no joke peering through the wet from the grim and rude interior of the boatswain's cabin at that brilliant cuddy, as though I were a 'tween-deck passenger and could only peep and envy. The tea and bread I had eaten had, it is true, plugged my appetite, still I felt as if there was enough hunger leaking out to qualify me to give an opinion on old Drainings' cookery; and above all, this skulking was extremely disagreeable, as tending to make me reckon that my courtship was to consist altogether of hiding and seeking. However, it was clearly not my policy to go and rise up before my darling as if I was a ghost, and frighten her, as I was bound to do, if my presence was not gently made known to her; and so, comforting myself with the reflection that the necessity of skulking would soon be over, I once more picked up the book of shipwrecks and went on reading until Jimmy and the carpenter came into the cabin.

No company do I like better than sailors', and the conversation of these two men was a real entertainment. It was evening, the anchor-watch had been set, a riding light was burning on the forestay, and, there being nothing more to do until the tug came alongside in the morning, the carpenter and boatswain were at liberty to yarn and smoke as long as they pleased, and then turn in. Threshold impressions, memories which belong to the first step of any momentous matter, are always lively and lasting, and that, no doubt, is why I recall the picture of that berth more vividly than I can see anything else in that vanished ship: the oil-lamp like a coffee-pot hanging overhead; the two bunks with their rough furniture of coarse blankets and mattresses which looked as old as Captain Cook's time, and as if they had been making voyages round the world ever since; the flap table against the ship's side; the battered sea chests upon which many a pound of

stick tobacco must have been cut, to judge from the web-like notchings along the edges of the lids; the oilskins and sou'westers hanging on nails up in a corner, looking like seamen who had committed suicide. The lamp cast a narrow stream of light through the sliding door on the deck, throwing out upon the darkness a few links of the huge chain cable that was stretched along from the windlass, and a coil of gear upon a belaying pin at the foot of the foremast, and such things. It was strange to hear the rushing noise of the wind and the seething of rain swept through shrouds and stays, and yet feel no motion in the hull, for the night was so black and the sound aloft so ocean-like that it was almost impossible at times to realise that we were on the smooth Thames, and Gravesend pretty nearly within musket-shot.

Not choosing to go supperless to bed, and yet not caring to make the steward wonder by asking him for something to eat, I partook of a bit of fresh beef which the boatswain brought out of a shelf, and one bell (half-past eight) having been struck on the quarter-deck I relieved my entertainers of my company, knowing very well that the poor tired fellows would turn in and fall fast asleep the moment my back was turned. The rain had ceased, but the sky had a wild look, and the decks were full of water for the want of a list to carry the wet through the scupper holes. I made my way aft and came to a stand opposite the cuddy front, through the windows of which I could command a view of the interior without being seen. Dinner had been cleared away a long while before. The place looked to me to be full of people, and I noticed the newly-married couple, whose name I afterwards heard was Mr. and Mrs. Marmaduke Mortimer, Captain Johnson, R.N., and his wife, a young gentleman named Thompson Tucker, Mrs. O'Brien, one or two other ladies, and at the thwartship table, at the end, Florence, Aunt Damaris, and Mr. Morecombe! When I saw that fellow talking to the aunt, and Florence sitting quietly alongside, my old miserable misgiving returned. It looked almost certain that she must have known Morecombe intended to accompany her, otherwise, could I suppose, if he had sneaked on board as I had, that he would have had the courage to discover himself within an hour or two of her arrival? Just as I was sure, if the aunt learnt that I was on board she would forthwith carry her niece ashore, might not he in the same way have feared that if Florence knew that he was going to make the voyage in the ship, she would insist upon leaving the vessel? Of course he enjoyed an immense advantage over me by having Aunt Damaris on his side, and he might presume upon that to make his presence known to Florence. Nevertheless, it rendered me extremely unhappy to see him there in that warm, comfortable, brilliant cuddy, close to Florence and chatting with the aunt, and not to be able to

satisfy my mind that his voyage had been arranged without the girl's knowledge.

The better to see her I went on to the poop, for they were all three of them sitting well within the range of the after skylight. A figure was walking up and down—one of the mates, no doubt—but it was too dark to see which of them it was. The wind was mighty keen, having grown more northerly and coming very fresh. I walked to the after skylight and looked down, and there under me was the beautiful face of the girl for whom I was taking all this desperate trouble and heaping discomforts upon my head. Had she been alone, the sight that skylight framed would have been like a vision, for the blackness stood all round the illuminated glass, and the deck was dark too, so that the radiance of the lamps, and the face and glittering hair of Florence, and the swell of her lovely bosom rounding above the table on which she rested her elbow with her white hand under her chin, were all contained in a kind of luminous square; but unfortunately for the beauty of that irradiated night-piece, Aunt Damaris was in it and so was Morecombe. There they were, all three of them, and I watched them. For ten minutes I stood overhanging that skylight, but during that time I never could detect that Florence spoke once, neither did I observe that she ever turned her face towards Mr. Morecombe. It would be hard to tell her exact expression in that light: the glass was wet and the moisture made its transparency treacherous, but if there was not a look of coldness and offended pride in her face, then I am blessed if I can tell you what other sort of appearance it presented. I took, as you may suppose, a prolonged squint at Aunt Damaris. One glimpse I had caught of her, as you will remember I told you, at Bristol, but the impression left was exceedingly small, and what I now saw therefore was quite fresh and new to me. She seemed about sixty years old: very sharp features, a long narrow nose, a wide mouth with thin lips, and small restless black eyes. Her hair was grey, and she was very bald about the parting. She wore two old-fashioned sausage-shaped curls in front of the ear. She looked to be dressed in black satin, for the stuff gleamed whenever she moved: her cap was large, with plenty of riband in it, and around her neck was a stretch of lace¹ or something of that kind, with the ends hanging down in front of her. She had the appearance, I am bound to say, of a respectable, well-to-do old lady.

Well, whilst I was staring down at them, I saw Florence lean towards her aunt, say something, and then rise. The old woman lifted her eyes to her and seemed to expostulate; then, apparently thinking better of it, she got up too, and shook hands with Mr. Morecombe, but Florence gave him such a chilly bow that the sight of it brought my two hands together in a rapturous squeeze,

¹ The right name is *fichu*, Florence has since told me.—JACK.

and then in a breath there was nothing left of the picture the skylight had framed but the bare table. I turned to go below by the cuddy front entrance and found the person I had noticed stamping the deck at my elbow and peering at me.

'Are you a cuddy passenger?' said he.

'I am,' I replied.

'Oh, I beg your pardon,' said he. 'May I ask what name?'

'Mr. John Egerton,' I answered.

'My name is Thornton,' said he, 'and I'm the chief officer. I did not notice you at dinner. I don't think I have seen you in this vessel before; when did you come aboard, sir?'

'In the docks.'

He continued to peer at me as though he could not make up his mind as to whether I was an Irish assassin or the latest English forger, but when, in reply to the question, I gave him the number of my cabin and the name of the person who was to share it with me, he exclaimed, 'Oh, it's all right, sir, of course,' and resumed his walk. This matter, trifling as it was, nevertheless hugely disgusted and annoyed me, and I was never more disposed to curse myself for a fool for putting myself into situations full of mortifications, misconstructions, and the obligation of sneaking and skulking. I lingered a few minutes on the poop, not choosing that the mate should flatter himself that he had hastened my departure. There was no rain, but the darkness was thickened with a rolling and eddying mist that sometimes drove past the illuminated skylights like bursts of steam. The lights at Gravesend twinkled wildly, and the loom of the high land behind was visible in a deeper blackness above the winking flickering sparks. The river from the light abreast of Northfleet away down as far as the Hope looked as if a galaxy of stars were hovering over its glooming waters: how many vessels those lanterns represented I could not imagine, but anyone might easily suppose, from the appearance of the multitudinous shining, that an immense fleet had brought up in Gravesend Reach. Most of the lights were stationary, but here and there you would see one reeling and staggering with a sweeping movement upon the darkness, denoting some small craft tossing upon the little sea which the strong wind had raised in the river, whilst close at hand over the side the water glimmered amid the deep night-shadow in dull flashes of pallid froth, and washed in a crunching sound along the bends of our motionless vessel, making the rudder jar now and again with a faint rattling of the tiller chains in the leading-sheaves. Aloft, the noise of the wind was like the shearing of a gale through a forest, but many a wild note there was in addition twanged on the harp-like rigging, and you could not have stood and listened for five minutes, with the sobbing of the water to help your fancy, without believing that a world of phantoms had come

down on the wings of the wind and alighted on those darkling spars and faintly glimmering yards—ghosts of mothers singing to wailing babies, ghosts of ruined men groaning in their misery, ghosts of madwomen shrieking in torment. A strange chorus, mates, as you all know, for what sailor's thoughts have not run to it? though, to find a meaning in such spirit-crying, there should be no shore-lights about, you must be leagues and leagues away out at sea, on the forecastle, say, where you may be alone, for aft there are the helmsman and the officer of the watch to keep you company—with a composant burning at the foreyard arm, and the ocean a wild and hurling shadow around you, with the desolate glint of foam under the bows and trailing in a line astern, making the deep as sad as a winter landscape with a sweep of blown snow lying on the black land under the blacker sky.

A few minutes of this were as much as satisfied me. I went on to the quarter-deck and looked through the cuddy windows. Florence and Aunt Damaris had withdrawn to their cabin; indeed, all the ladies had retired, and the only occupants of the cuddy were a group of three or four men, Morecombe amongst them, sipping grog at that part of the table which was nearest the stove.

Seeing the road clear I entered, walked straight into my cabin and went to bed.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. MORECOMBE IS SEA-SICK.

HAD I been a sailor just turned in after having been twenty-four hours on deck, I could not have fallen asleep more quickly nor slept more soundly. At what hour Mr. Morecombe came to bed I do not know; I never heard him, though he was the first thing I remembered in the morning, when I awoke and found the autumn sunshine standing like a wall of silver against the thick glass of the large scuttle or circular window. I put my head over the side of the bunk and saw him underneath; he was wide awake, and instantly sang out, 'Hallo! good morning.'

'Good morning,' I answered.

'I say,' cried he, 'can you tell me the time? My old turnip has stopped, and hang me—aw—if I know whether I ought to get up or not.'

I looked at my watch that was in my waistcoat, slung within reach. 'A quarter to eight,' said I.

'At what hour do we bbreakfast, do you know?' said he, forking his legs out of bed and looking about him for his smallclothes.

'I really can't say. If you'll put your head out the steward

will tell you, if he's in sight,' I replied, debating within myself whether to get up or sham indisposition and have breakfast in my cabin. I decided upon the latter, and accordingly lay down again, drawing a long face as I turned my nose up to the deck above. The ship was on a level keel, but there was the tremor of passing water in the light outside, and I might easily guess that we were in the wake of a towing tug. It was pretty plain, however, that we had not long been under way; fine as the weather might be now, there was too much weight in last night's wind to leave the water calm in the river's mouth where the Channel swell would be, and I reckoned by the feel in the hull that, even if we had passed the Nore, Prince's Channel was still some distance ahead.

Morecombe put on his drawers and boots, and, opening the cabin door, peered out, and catching sight of one of the stewards, ascertained the breakfast hour, and then said to me, 'We bweak-fast at a quarter to nine. Would you like to get up? because if so I'll go to bed until you've done d'wessing. It's a dayvlish tight fit for two,' says he, looking around him, 'and dem me if it isn't too cold for tubbing. Suppose there's a bathwoom somewhere?'

'I shan't get up,' said I; 'I don't feel very well.'

'Not sea-sick, are you?' he exclaimed. 'Oh, hang it all, you can't be sea-sick *yet*. Why, the ship isn't moving!'

'It's not the movement, it's the smell,' said I. 'It's what they call the bilge water. Sniff strongly, and you'll see what I mean,' and I gave a bit of a grunt.

'Dem me if I'm going to sniff,' says he. 'Don't smell any thing wong naturally, and don't want to fancy things. I say, didn't you tell me your name was Egerton?'

'You'll see it on that box there?' I replied, pretending to speak with an effort.

'Any welation,' says he, lathering himself for a shave, 'to the Tatton Egertons?'

'No,' I replied, knowing that the fellow had a lot of titled connections, and that I must mind my eye.

'Oulton-Park Egertons, pwaps?' said he, flourishing a razor and squinting at himself in the looking-glass.

'Nothing to do with them,' I answered.

'Is it the Ellesmere family then—or pwaps it's Wilton?' said he, awaiting my answer before applying his razor.

'It's a Kentish family,' said I in a faint manner. 'There were five of us, counting my parents, and I am the only one surviving.'

His mind went to work upon this answer whilst he shaved, but he didn't appear to make much of it. When that job was over he said, 'What's taking you to Austwalia—hailth?'

'That's it,' said I. 'Lord, isn't the ship heaving! or can it be the bilge water?'

'Dayvlish odd!' cried he. 'Deck's as steady as land, and

whatever bilge water may be, dooce take me if I can smell anything wrong.'

'Oh,' said I, 'perhaps you're an old sailor; if so, it's not fair to laugh at me.'

'Old sailor,' cried he; 'well, I've done a bit of yachting with my uncle, Lord Alehester. Know him?' I wagged my head. 'But I'm as ignorant of the water and of—aw—ships of this kind—haw—by gad, as I am of tailoring. More so, dooce take me, Mr. Egerton, for, look heear, a man can't live long without finding out that tailors are fwightful thieves and beastly bill-discounters. Glad to think that old Hebwee, Madox of Bond Street—— Know him?' I replied that I did not. 'Madox isn't his wight name,' continued he; 'can't say what it is, and curse me if I care. Glad to feel I owe him thwee hundred pounds, though. He can't take a boat and follow me, you know; ha ha! Ever been to Austwalia before?'

I made a sound that might pass for yes or no.

'Vulgar people the Austwalian, I hear; but, poor dayvils, they can't help it. If we send out convicts there, why, dooce seize it, it's too much to expect their descendants to be gentlemen. Had a little blood gone wong and they'd twansported it, why, then you know, you might expect to find a bit of polish heear and there-ah. I know an old Austwalian cock—shan't tell you where he lives—who's got so much money that this cabin wouldn't hold it in sovevins. Of all the old snobs—— Why, he sports a crest with as much assurance as if it had come to him from the Conquewor; whereas I'd bet any man half a dozen hats that he stole or invented it since he awived in England. A fellow can't help spwinging from nothing, you know, but it's a doocid piece of impertinence when he not only imitates his bettaws, but twies to pass himself off as one of them.'

His reference to Alphonso—for what other old Australian cock should he mean—as a cad was extremely agreeable to me. 'Little you wot, my aristocratic friend,' thought I, as I watched him combing his hair and putting on his high stick-up collar, 'how all that you say is being taken down against you.' Why, I never should have dreamt that the creature was such a chatterbox nor such a consummate ass as his conversation proved him to be. Was it very surprising that Florence should think him a fool and despise him and reject him? How should such an ape make love? Even his good looks, as I now began to perceive, were effective only on the first impression. I had thought him handsome, as you know, when I saw him in Bristol—and handsome he was; but as I lay with my eyes upon him now, I reckoned that the girl he married would need to be as great an idiot as he not to find his beauty mighty insipid after a month or two.

In handling this fellow I am annoyed to feel that I can't put

him before you with the right kind of colour to make the picture true to life. He had a sort of stammer impossible to express in words; he garnished his language with a variety of oaths—of the most approved and modish kind, no doubt, and quite in keeping with the character of a young swell—but which I am obliged to soften or omit, and so sacrifice a characteristic I remember him by: and he said aw and haw just as Sophie had described (indeed, I fancied I could detect the source of Hawke's aristocratic pronunciation and hesitation), but in a manner so peculiar, that were he in the next room and you heard one of those aw's you would be able to put a perfect image of the man before you merely from catching the conceit, the imbecility, the impudent suggestion of condescension, and I know not what other things which the sound conveyed.

Having finished dressing, he said, putting on his hat, 'If we haven't left Gwavesend, dem me if I don't go ashore and have a look at the place. Had scarcely time to do more yesterday than get a fit of indigestion. Since I have the bore of twavelling I may as well see all I can, and as Gwavesend's a place where the common people go and eat shwimps in the summer, I ought to be able, when I return, to tell my friends that I've been over it.'

I did not deceive the man, and, as he was leaving the cabin, I asked him to be good enough to send the steward to me. This seemed to astonish him, for he said, 'Swardinawy you should feel sea-sick! If you're ill now, by George, what'll you do when we get out upon the sea?' He then went away, and presently the steward arrived—a smart little man in a round jacket and bow legs, named Hay.

'When breakfast is ready, let me have a cup of tea and something to eat here, will you?' said I.

'Yes, sir.'

'Where are we now, steward?'

'In the Warp, sir,' he answered, naming the well-known stretch of river betwixt the Nore and the Oaze Deep.

'Is the captain on deck?'

'He's just gone into his cabin,' replied Hay.

'Please go at once and tell him, with my compliments, that his friend, Mr. Jack Egerton, will breakfast in his cabin, and that he hopes to be able to go on deck during the afternoon.'

I knew that Daniel would understand my meaning: for you see, on recalling his short memory I was afraid that he would forget to tell Florence I was aboard unless I employed some means to remind him of his promise. However, I was speedily eased of that fear by the steward returning. 'The captain's compliments to you, sir, and he certainly hopes you will be well enough to come on deck this afternoon, and perhaps before. He'll look in upon you, sir, after breakfast.'

Well, there I lay in my bunk, sometimes laughing to myself until I was like to split, when I thought of Morecombe and the wonderful absurdity of our sharing the same cabin, and then falling as grave as a judge and feeling a kind of tremble running through me when I turned my mind to Florence and wondered how she would receive the news of my being in the ship and what sort of greeting she would give me when Daniel 'introduced' us. I pulled out her locket, which, you may reckon, boys, I wore day and night, and found a sort of strength in kissing it, for after all I considered she must like me a deal more than a little bit to have sent me that keepsake, and she surely would not like me less for following her to the world's end, as I was literally doing. Anyhow, she could not use me worse than she had treated Morecombe, if there was any meaning in the manner I spied in her when I peered through the skylight last night; and when I recalled the bit of behaviour I had taken notice of, it surprised me that the man should be able to carry himself so easily as he did in his imbecile conversation with me; for knowing how her coldness would affect *me*, I found it mighty hard to understand his indifference, for so it seemed, even when I had made the most liberal allowance for him as a conceited fool who was cock-sure in his own mind of winning the girl sooner or later, and was only astonished that such a killing, lovely, highly-connected creature should not have been instantly accepted.

The first breakfast bell was rung, and half-an-hour later I could hear all the passengers at table, a regular hum of voices, broken by the clattering of plates and now and again the loud distinct tones of Captain Jackson and Mrs. O'Brien. I strained my ear to catch the only notes which would fall sweetly upon it, and sometimes fancied I could detect the rich bell-like music of my darling's voice; but fancy it was, of course, and I wished it to be so, for it pleased me best to think of her as cold and silent, and averting her beautiful face from the eye-glass that I might reckon would be peering at her hard by, with a puppy's eye behind it.

The steward came into my cabin with a well-stocked tray, in the inspiration of which methought I could trace my friend Daniel; and glad was I to fall to, for the aroma of the good things on the cuddy table stealing in through the venetian-like paneling of the door had excited a lively hunger in me. I speedily cleared the tray, tumbled out of my bunk, shaved and dressed myself, and then, opening the scuttle and finding it to leeward, I lighted a pipe and smoked it with my face in the aperture, so that no smell of the tobacco should pass into the cuddy. It was like looking through a telescope without the magnification. Only a small view was to be got through the open port, but what there was of it was all sunshine and streaming waters, a kind of trembling white radiance, with the lines of the breeze-swept river-

surface shining like ribs of polished steel through it, and a glimpse across the Kentish flats of the Whitstable and Herne Bay coast, looking like a stretch of blue haze. The tug was towing bravely, and the noise of the seething of the foam from her paddles washing past beneath me came up like the sound of a fountain; but I would now and again hear an ominous creak, a significant strain of timber or bulwark, and note that the horizon would take a slight slant first toward the bows and then towards the stern, as if it were the central portion of some gigantic see-saw. If, thought I, we are beginning to feel the swell *here*, we should be finding a pleasant tumble further on.

Another half-hour passed. The motion was growing more defined, the creaking busier, and I was beginning to feel mighty tired of my cabin and to pine for the sunshine, and the breeze, and the leg-stretching space of poop. What! already? Somebody was sick in the next cabin. The groaning was as that of a monk wrestling with Beelzebub. There was no periodical explosion, no hopeful and soothing blow-up, but a steady grumbling, and now and again a slight roar. On a sudden a tap fell on my door, and in walked Daniel Thompson. His red face was illuminated by a broad grin, whilst he snuffed and exclaimed in a sepulchral voice, 'Hallo! who's been smoking here?'

'It's that box,' said I, pointing to Morecombe's; 'it's full of tobacco. How are you, Daniel, and what news have you brought me?'

'Well, I've done your business,' he answered. 'It's all right. She knows you're aboard. You can clear out of this.'

'Have you really explained already?' cried I. 'What did she say? For heaven's sake, speak out, Daniel, I thought you were coming to see me after breakfast to arrange what to say to her?'

'I'm not going to make a long yarn of it,' he replied. 'I have other things to do. See here, Jack, it was after breakfast: she and her aunt and Mr. Morecombe were on the poop. Hallo! what's that noise?'

'Somebody sick next door,' I replied. 'Heave ahead, Thompson.'

'Well, they were on the poop. Presently the aunt goes below, young Morecombe having previously stepped over to Mrs. O'Brien to answer some question she had sung out to him. I saw my chance and went up to the girl, and after manœuvring a bit, as nervous as a stammering chap in a witness-box, and wishing you at Jericho for putting me on such a job, I told her plump that you had asked me to say you were aboard under some name which I couldn't for the moment recollect.'

'Well?'

'Well—she just turned the colour of the ship's ensign. Split me, Jack, if ever I saw a girl blush so heavily before,' said he. 'A

red Indian wouldn't have been in it alongside her. I'd have sheered off right away for fear that the others might twig the rosy look, and suspect I was making love to her, if I hadn't been more afraid, if they saw me go off in a hurry, that they'd imagine I had insulted her. But I say, my friend—she's a real beauty. You have a correct taste. She's a fine girl. I don't know that I ever saw a handsomer eye in a female. "I'm an old friend of his," said I, "and I undertake this job merely to oblige him, and, I hope, you too," said I. "He declines to show up until I've informed you he's in the ship, and the next business, I think," said I, "he wants me to undertake, is to introduce him to you as if you were strangers, which, when done, will complete all that my friend Jack expects of me."

'Was that all that passed?' said I.

'That's all,' he answered.

I thanked him heartily for his kindness, assuring him that as a friend in need he was the best of all friends, and I begged him to believe that I appreciated his friendliness all the more for knowing how the sense of his being skipper would bother him in his willingness to lend me a hand.

'What will you do now?' said he. 'There's no need to keep below, is there? I think you told me the aunt don't know you?'

I answered that I would go forward, where I could command the poop; if Florence was alone I would come aft, but I explained that it would not be advisable to introduce me in the presence of the aunt, as Florence's manner, on our first meeting, might betray us.

'All right,' said he; 'but you'll understand, Jack, after I've introduced you to her you must go on making love alone. I'll have nothing more to do with it; and I hope you'll tell her never on any account in the future to speak of the part I have played, for though it might make my fortune among the girls it would ruin me among the fathers, who, after all, are the people who choose ships and pay the passage money.'

I promised him in the most solemn manner that not a syllable concerning him should ever escape Miss Hawke or me, and he then went away.

I was in the act of struggling into a top coat, when the door was violently flung open and Mr. Morecombe bolted in. He was deadly pale, and his chest hollowed and swelled out like a pair of bellows, whilst his face had a twist in it as though he was strangling. He stood in the middle of the cabin glaring around him whilst a man might have counted ten, and his eyes then lighting on the wash-basin, he rushed up to it and vomited in the most dreadful manner that ever I beheld. No doubt I was right in suspecting that he had felt sick for some time, but had been fighting with his qualms on deck, and had rushed below to

be ill out of sight of Miss Hawke. I tell you, his sufferings seemed dreadful, and he raised such an outcry as he hung over the basin, with both hands grasping his waistcoat, the perspiration streaming down his face, and first one leg and then the other giving a wild kick up astern of him as he roared, that I had not the heart to leave him until his paroxysm was over.

'Let me give you a hand into your bunk,' said I. 'You can't do better than lie down, and I will send the steward to you.'

Well, I bundled him into his bunk, and never did a more woebegone face embellish a fellow. Ladies, you should have seen this good-looking fellow! I pulled open his shirt-collars, which were choking him, and hauled off his boots and put the basin alongside of him. He lay groaning and moaning like a wounded man, and the noise he made appeared to have started off the person in the next cabin afresh, for in the intervals of Morecombe's rumblings I could hear the muffled notes of similar sounds beyond the bulkhead. I quitted the cabin, and calling to the steward, told him to look after the gentleman in number 4, and then went on to the main-deck, watched with some surprise by the little bow-legged fellow, who would scarcely know what to make of a man that was one moment too ill to leave his bed for the breakfast table, and the next was stepping along the deck with the deep sea-roll that comes like an instinct the moment the trained leg feels the heave of a deck-plank.

CHAPTER XXII.

WITH MY LOVE.

A NOBLE morning it was, streaming and shining, a light blue sky and a crescent of mares' tails over the mastheads and a flock of steam-coloured clouds scattering on the lee horizon, where the land was a greenish film on our starboard bow. To windward the pale green water ran into the whitish sky, and all that way there was nothing to be seen but a deep collier swarming along stiff as a church, with her yards hard against the lee rigging. The black smoke of the tug blew away from our flying jibboom end, and our ship followed with every stay-sail upon her hoisted, a crowd of passengers on the forecastle sunning themselves and standing black against the white cloths of the jibs, a blue vein breaking from the galley chimney, the gay decks glittering like sand, and a sweep of blue heaven deepening and lightening beyond the curve of the bows, which rose and sank upon the ruffled folds of the swell that was rolling out of the Channel into which we were heading. I stepped as far as the main-hatch and then took a squint aft. The pilot was walking athwart the poop close to the brass rail, taking a sharp look ahead and around at every turn,

but I had to go a little further to see as much as I needed of the poop, and when abreast of the galley I stopped again and saw Florence near the mizzenmast talking to some children.

Three or four only of the passengers were about, and Aunt Damaris was certainly not one of them. Thompson stood right aft near the wheel, and the idea coming into my head that he was waiting there to 'introduce' me, and might be wondering what on earth was keeping me below, I pulled myself together and stepped without further ado on to the poop. He spied me the moment my head was above the ladder, and advanced to meet me.

'Jack,' said he, 'there's the lady, but you don't want me to introduce you, do ye? Hang it, there's nobody looking. Give me as little to do in this job as you can, mate.'

'Let's carry the programme through,' I replied, my heart thumping under my coat. 'You told her you would introduce me.' (This was not quite true, by the way.) 'Some confounded eye that we don't suspect may be on us; so take me up to her, will you?'

Florence had her back upon us, and pointed to the collier whilst she talked to the children.

'Come along, then,' said Thompson. 'If it *must* be done, let's get it over;' and leaving me to follow he went up to Florence, who, in turning to him, saw me. Nobody but the nurse who had charge of the children was near enough to notice what was going on, and she called the youngsters away when we advanced; and lucky it was that nobody paid attention, for the abrupt manner in which Daniel had walked up to my darling and the extraordinary flourish he made over the business of introducing me must have set any observer wondering.

'Allow me, Miss Hawke,' said he, contorting himself into the queerest of nautical bows, and waving his hands as though he were motioning to the man at the wheel, 'to have the pleasure of introducing my friend Jack Edge—Edgy—hum! Mr. Jack Edgymore to you. Mr. Edgymore—Miss Hawke. Nice weather, Miss Hawke. The tug will be dropping us presently, and then we shall make sail, you know. Ahem! yes, that will be it;' and he fixed a bewildered eye on me as if he should say, 'Must I go on talking a bit, or walk off at once?'

I raised my hat, and Florence, not being able to help herself, bowed, though one glance into each other's eyes was enough to satisfy us that we both equally felt the absurdity of this situation. But trying in its way as it was, let me tell you, lads, that *her* composure and self-possession could not have been completer had this been really our first introduction. A bright colour had flashed into her cheeks when she turned and saw me, but it was gone before Daniel had ended his speech, and looking at me with a faint, nervous, twitching smile upon her lips, she said in her sweet quiet voice through which ran a kind of tremble, 'I was

very much surprised when Captain Thompson told me that you were on board the *Strathmore* and going to Australia, Mr. Seymour.'

When she pronounced my name Daniel laughed, and then appearing to find something deeply interesting in the sky to windward, he crossed the deck.

'I hope you are not angry with me,' I began, scarcely knowing what to say, and hardly able to realise that I was alongside her *at last*, talking to her, looking into her beautiful eyes, and that this was just the very beginning of many weeks of constant association.

'Indeed I have not had time to find out,' she replied. 'I am too much astonished. I had no idea you would take such a step. If Sophie knew your intention, she should have told me.'

'I assure you she knew nothing whatever about it,' I replied. 'I dared not trust her for fear of my project reaching your ears, and perhaps your father's. She wrote to tell me she wondered that I did not try to see you before you left, which made my secret the harder for me to keep from her, but her surprise will end when she gets my letter. Did you think I could endure to be separated from you? You sent me this to remember you by,' said I, hauling out the locket, 'but did you believe it would suffice? There is only one thing in this world that will satisfy me as a keepsake—and that is yourself.'

She bent her eyes downwards, quietly smiling. Thompson was talking to the pilot; Mrs. O'Brien had got hold of the children and was amusing them; Captain Jackson and his wife stumped the other side of the poop arm in arm; everybody else belonging aft was below.

'Of course you know, Mr. Seymour, that my aunt is with me?' said she, after a pause.

'Yes,' I replied. 'She is the reason why I have shipped as Jack Egerton. Will you call me Egerton? If you address me as Seymour she will guess who I am.'

'Ought I to say I will?' she answered, smiling. 'It will be so difficult.' And then with an uneasy look coming into her face she said, 'Are you fair in asking me to be deceitful? I wish you had not come.'

'Don't, for heaven's sake, say so!' cried I. 'If my presence annoys you, I'll shift my quarters into the 'tween decks yonder, and never approach this part of the vessel for the rest of the voyage. It will be something, at all events, to feel that I am in the same ship with you. When I made up my mind to follow you I never feared that you would wish I had not come. It's true that I did not dare hope you would be glad to see me, but I counted upon your not being angry, for it is for love of you, and only for that, Florence, that I have followed you.'

'I am not angry, Mr. Sey—, Mr. Edg—, Mr. — Oh, what am I to call you?' she exclaimed, colouring and stammering. 'I do not want you to leave this part of the ship; I—I—' The darling broke down, looking away with her sweet eyes over the sea, with a trembling of the lovely lashes as though tears were not far off; and then rallying a bit she said in her gentle way, with a quiver in the lower notes of her voice: 'The deceitfulness is the only part I dislike. I shall never be able to address you as Mr. Egerton without feeling that I am telling a story.'

'Then,' said I, peeping round into her face, 'if you can't help feeling that it will be wrong to call me Mr. Egerton, say Jack when we are alone—that will be enough; there's no need to address me by any name when others are present.'

Here came another pause, and then said she—

'Do you know that Mr. Reginald Morecombe is in this ship?'

'Perfectly well,' I replied. 'He shares my cabin; and I have just left him horridly sea-sick, after stowing him away in his bunk.'

'What! does *he* know you are here?' she cried, with her eyes wide open with wonder.

'He knows that Mr. Egerton is here—that's all,' I answered.

'But have you never met before?'

'I caught a glimpse of him once at Bristol, but he did not see me, and does not know me from Adam.'

She raised her hands with a gesture of astonishment, and then I suppose the absurdity of his sharing my cabin—indeed, the ridiculousness of the position we were all of us in—struck her; she broke into a short semi-hysterical laugh, though she grew very soon grave again, and turned a glance now and then at the companion hatch which caused me to ask her if she expected her aunt to come on deck.

'I don't think she will come,' she answered. 'She complained of feeling a little sick, and went to her cabin to lie down.'

'Does not this motion inconvenience you?'

'Not in the least,' she replied; and indeed I had already noticed how easily she poised her beautiful figure to the heave of the deck. Looking at her closely whilst we conversed, and better able to observe points in her now that my agitation was gone, I took notice of a certain careworn expression in her face—a sorrowful appearance that would have passed with me as the grief she would feel in saying good-bye to her home, were it not that it looked too old to belong to the date of her farewell. She caught me watching her wistfully, and I at once said—

'I am afraid they have been making you unhappy on my account. You haven't the healthful, happy looks I remember, Florence; though, please God, they'll be coming back to you now.'

She did not answer me; whether or not she liked me calling

her Florence, there was no rebuke in her face when I said the word.

'I heard from Sophie,' said I, 'that you were a good deal worried when in Scotland. Did you know that Mr. Morecombe was to be one of the *Strathmore's* passengers?'

'How can you ask me?' she answered quickly, with a sparkle like a tear in her eyes, and the cold look I had noticed when peering at her through the skylight on the previous evening coming into her face. 'I should not be here if I *had* known.'

'Ah!' said I, 'I see how the coast lies now. What a mean wretch he must be to pursue you in this fashion after your flat rejection of him. The instant I entered my cabin and spied the fellow's traps I saw the plot. How could your father have the heart to subject you to this sort of thing? What opinion can he have of you not to guess that the more Mr. Morecombe worries you the more you will hate him!'

She could not help smiling at this, dejected as she looked and was, and said—

'The idea of the voyage is Aunt Damaris', not papa's,' as though she would apologise for her father.

'And was it Miss Damaris Hawke who suggested the notion of Mr. Morecombe's voyaging to Australia with you?'

'I cannot tell you, Mr. Sey—, Mr. —'

'Jack—say Jack, Florence,' I exclaimed. 'If you will not think of me as myself, think of me as Sophie's cousin, and you'll not find Jack hard to pronounce. If you do not mind me calling you Florence, why should you hesitate to call me Jack?'

'You call me Florence without asking my leave—how do you know I don't mind?' she answered.

Well, it was early times to press this matter of Jack, so I went back to my question as to what share Aunt Damaris had in the plot that had brought young Morecombe into the *Strathmore*. She replied that she could not say, as until she came aboard at Gravesend she did not know that Mr. Morecombe meant to sail in the ship. She said that shortly after their arrival in Scotland Aunt Damaris had asked her if she would like to return to Sydney with her in September, and stop a few months there. She answered yes, the voyage would amuse her, and she would be glad to see Sydney again. A little later her father talked to her on the same matter, and made her see he wished her to go with her aunt; so then she took the thing in earnest, and wrote to Sophie about it, but she had not the least idea that the voyage was a plan to bring her and Morecombe together; she never thought when she left England to see the youth again, otherwise, though she was quite willing to go to Australia, she never would have sailed in that ship with him. She told me all in a very quiet way, speaking softly and often looking at me anxiously as if

she feared I might distrust any portion of her narrative. She did not utter a word against her father or her aunt, nevertheless she contrived somehow or other to make me see that ever since she had met me she had led an uncomfortable, if not an unhappy life at her home; and that being so, then there was very little to wonder at in her willingness to leave it for a spell. I noticed that as we continued conversing the embarrassment she had first shown passed away, she warmed up, glancing at me with a sort of pleasure in her eyes as if she was beginning to thoroughly realise that I was on board. And, my lads, even if this girl thought of me then as no more than a friend, there would be a pleasantness when she looked along the ship and saw the crowd of strange people on the main deck and forecastle and then over the bows and beheld the leagues of heaving sea there, in remembering that I was on board, with a face that brought up pleasant memories of Clifton, and Bristol Cathedral, and Sophie, and the like; for though, to be sure, her aunt was in the ship, the feeling that the old woman sided with her brother and had meanly played into his hands would so qualify the sense of companionship as to make the girl feel, when she looked around the sea, that she was hardly less alone than the loneliest of the 'tween-deck passengers. So I believe that she would have been glad to know that I was on board, even had I been merely a friend, but it would not do to pretend that I was no more than that to her. There were memories between us which rose in me as sweet as the recollection of kisses, and her nervousness and wonder at my presence being past, she could not view the ocean towards which we were towing, nor reflect that these were the first hours of a voyage that was to last for some months, without guessing that it must be something deeper than a boyish whim that had brought me alongside of her to take my chance of what she might think and how she might treat me.

I was much too earnest and absorbed in talk with her to take notice of what was passing around. The swell of the sea was growing longer and heavier, and the funnel of the tug waved handsomely athwart our hawse as the great ship curtsied solemnly in her wake. Mrs. O'Brien, the nurse, and the children had gone below, and the only persons now on the poop besides ourselves were the pilot, the captain, the second mate, who stood to leeward near the mizzen rigging, and Captain Jackson and his wife. I should have said, had I been asked to forecast this adventure, that it would have taken me some time to reconcile Florence to my presence; that the sense that her father, were he to know that I was on board, would command her to have nothing to do with me, would weigh upon her as a heavy obligation; and that consequently it would cost me a long struggle to bring her heart nearer to mine—though if I had ever doubted of accomplishing

this, never of course would I have undertaken the voyage. But whether it was that she liked me better than I should have dared to believe, or that her indignation at finding this voyage nothing but a trap set by her father and aunt for Morecombe to catch her in made her defiant, I found after the first five or ten minutes of uneasiness that she talked to me freely and gladly. She never appeared to give herself any trouble as to Aunt Damaris' movements, and, instead of thinking we had conversed long enough, and that she ought to go to her aunt in the cabin, she immediately joined me in patrolling the deck when I proposed walking for fear that she would feel the cold by standing. I caught Thompson grinning away like clockwork as we faced round on reaching the taffrail. What there was in us to tickle his fancy I do not know and did not care. I was passionately proud, happy beyond expression, triumphantly joyous at having my darling with me, keeping me company, talking with a lighter note in her dear voice, and letting me see, though without an atom of coquetry, that her first alarm at sight of me was false to her deeper feelings, and that she was welcoming me now—not perhaps as a man whom she loved, but as a man whom she knew devotedly loved her. She talked to me as if it did her good to open her mind, and although you may think that she ought to have found Mr. Morecombe a delicate subject to discuss with me, I assure you she spoke out about him with great frankness, and seemed to be amazed at his hardihood in taking this voyage with her after her refusal of him.

'Oh, but he's such a fool,' said I; 'so ludicrously self-conceited that he won't believe you're in earnest. He supposes, I daresay, you don't know him well enough, but that you'll have found him out before you get to Sydney, and allow yourself to be vanquished.'

She smiled disdainfully. 'At all events,' said she, 'I've made up my mind to return in this ship. I have said nothing to Aunt Damaris, nor shall I for some time to come, but if Mr. Morecombe intends to remain in Sydney, that place will not be big enough to contain me too, and I shall go home with your friend Captain Thompson.'

As she said this, my mind went to the fellow groaning and writhing on his back in the cabin, and I said, 'If he's going to continue as sea-sick as he's begun he'll have more than he wants of the voyage before we are out of the Channel.'

'Why,' asked she suddenly, 'do you insist upon calling yourself Egerton?'

'Because,' I replied, 'if your aunt finds out who I am she will not allow you to speak to me.'

Her eyes took a brighter light as she exclaimed, 'Do not you think I have any will of my own? There is no harm in your speaking to me, Mr. Seymour, and if I choose to let you do so I do not think that my aunt would object.'

There was a perfect revelation to me in these few words. Sweet and tender and gloriously lovable I always knew her to be, but never should I have believed that with the adorable qualities of her heart she combined real force of character. And yet, upon my word, I had only to remember how she had refused Morecombe in defiance of all the influence her father could bring to bear upon her, and how loyally she had stuck to my cousins, and with what a brave, uncomplaining soul she embarked on this long voyage, to wonder that I should have needed a speech from her to find out that she had a high spirit. I hardly knew what answer to make her.

'I don't wish to influence you,' she continued, 'but if you have assumed a name only for my sake, let me assure you the disguise is unnecessary. You are quite right in supposing that my aunt would be very vexed to find you on board, but why should I study other people's feelings when I see how little mine are considered. I'm not responsible for your being here, but my aunt is answerable for Mr. Morecombe's presence, and she came to the ship at Gravesend expecting to find him in her, as I could see by the way they met. Aunt Damaris doesn't mind humiliating me by this plot, as you might call it, and since you *are* on board, Mr. Seymour, I do not know why she should not be told who you are.'

There was no anger in her manner, but she spoke as a woman would who is deeply offended, with a flush in her cheek and a sparkling in her eyes and a trembling of the lips.

'I will do whatever you wish,' I replied, 'and I feel the truth of all that you say, believe me. But as my name is down as Egerton, as the stewards and others know me by that name, and as it is on my luggage, it would be rather awkward to alter it. And then,' said I, 'think of the effect of the discovery upon Mr. Morecombe, who, you must know, sleeps in the bunk under mine. We should end our days like the Kilkenny cats. If Sydney would not be big enough to hold you and him, I am sure this ship would not be large enough to hold him and me if once I discovered that he knew who I was.'

She broke into one of her old merry laughs, and said, 'You will do as you like, I suppose, but I shall never be able to speak or think of you as Mr. Egerton, aristocratic as the name is.'

'I want you to think of me as Jack and call me so—not of course before others, but when we are alone. Will you?' I asked.

'I can't tell you now,' she replied, coming to a stand at the companion; and putting her foot upon the steps, she looked a few moments at the haze of land on the starboard beam with a shadow of melancholy on her beautiful eyes, and then saying, 'There is no chance of our not meeting again soon *now*,' she went below.

(To be continued.)

French and English Towns.

THERE are few forms of antiquarian research more agreeable than that of spelling out all that revolutionary havoc has left of an old French city, its walls and gates, if any are happily left, its streets, its churches, its houses, any other fragments of antiquity that may have been spared. Such an inquiry in a French town has some features of its own which distinguish it from the same kind of inquiry either in England or in Italy. The French town is in the nature of things more strange to the English visitor than any town in his own land can be; but it is far less strange than the Italian town. That it should be so follows from the geography and history of the two countries. England and France lie on the same side of the Alps, and they have much of their history in common in which Italy has little or no share. For many artistic and historical purposes France and England form parts of one whole to the exclusion of Italy. And yet, in the particular matter of towns, France and Italy have, as we shall presently see, some things in common as against England. As for the general look of the towns of the three countries, we may safely say that the site of a French town is commonly more picturesque than that of an English town, and that of an Italian town more picturesque than that of a French town. The city set on an hill is the exception in England; at least it seems to be so, for our cities, London to begin with, stand far more commonly on hills than we think at first sight. Only our hills are for the most part very small; those which carry the hill-cities of France are higher; those which carry the hill-cities of Italy are higher still. If in the Lombard plain the sites are sometimes even lower than in England, Tuscany with its living cities, Latium with its dead ones, takes it out the other way. In our land we wonder at Lincoln and Durham; they would not seem wonderful in the land of Le Mans and Laon; still less would they seem wonderful in the land of dead Tusculum and living Perugia. But for the picturesqueness of the city itself, France stands far above either England or Italy; Germany alone equals or surpasses

it. The English or the Italian town will often equal or surpass the French town in the architectural merits of this or that building, and many an Italian town has noble displays of street architecture to which neither England nor France has anything to compare. But there is no denying that English buildings, unless they are real works of architecture, are apt to be ugly; and to speak the plain truth, the same is often the case with Italian buildings also. The outskirts of an Italian town are very often simply hideous; those of a French or German town are often highly picturesque. In both France and Germany we are always lighting on buildings or scraps of buildings which we can hardly say are works of architecture, but which are what we call picturesque, that is pleasing in their outline. Many a French street is saved from commonplace, if it be only by a projecting turret or corbelled window here and there, an effective feature which in this island is more common in Scotland than in England. After all the havoc of revolution, and the worse havoc of fussy mayors and prefects, the old towns of France contain quite enough of mere attractive scraps of this kind to make it well worth while to thread their narrow streets, even were their higher associations, their great buildings and their historic memories, a good deal less precious than they are.

To compare more specially our English and our French town, the differences which strike the eye between them are in many points very obvious at the first glance, and the causes of them go very deep into the history of the two countries. One might perhaps say, as a very general statement indeed, that French towns differ less from one another than English towns do, and that it is more easy to make general propositions about them. There is a kind of French town, common in all parts of France, which in a manner sets the standard, and which may in some sort pass as the ideal French town. This is the old, respectable, steady-going, local capital, which has been the local capital from the beginning of things and which seems as if it must go on being the local capital to the end of things. It may or it may not have some considerable trade or manufacture; it is doubtless more flourishing if it has; but it would seem as if its essential being goes on all the same whether it has or has not. The population of these towns, old heads of duchies and counties, modern heads of departments, keeps an average a good deal higher than that of those of our county-towns which are not seats of manufactures. It keeps an average very much lower than that of our great manufacturing towns. Somewhere from twenty to fifty thousand would seem to be

the right population for the worshipful old city on its hill or beside its river, which still keeps the name of the Gaulish tribe which dwelled there in the days of Cæsar. Anything very much larger or smaller than this strikes one as exceptional. There can hardly be more than half-a-dozen French towns which rise much above 100,000. I believe there are none which reach 400,000. That is to say, a town of the size of Hull or Bristol is rare in France; one of the size of Liverpool or Glasgow is unknown. But be it noted again that the few exceptionally great cities are in most cases among the oldest cities of the land, cities whose ancient importance has never left them. Our greatest cities are not Colchester and York; but the greatest cities of France are Lyons and Marseilles. The most remarkable case in France of a great town springing up to importance in modern times is St. Etienne. But Lancashire and Yorkshire can count off a dozen or twenty St. Etiennes in a breath. On the other hand, the local capital in France is very seldom so small as some of those old county-towns in England which are county and cathedral towns and little more. I am least of all men called on to name, lest I should ruffle the feelings of my immediate neighbours. There can be very few heads of departments in France—hardly Tulle in Corrèze, though it is much smaller than most—which the most advanced reformer from Lancashire would speak of as ‘miserable decaying villages.’ At the same time such a reformer would most likely look on many of the old local capitals of France as somewhat old-world, somewhat behindhand, hardly up to the level of an advancing age. Even when they have advanced in the modern sense, they hardly show it so conspicuously to the eye as the advancing towns of England. Limoges, for example, ancient cradle of enamel, is still a very flourishing manufacturing town. But, though some of its crooked streets have been cruelly straightened, it is still the old town of the massacre, the town of *Cité* and *Ville* side by side. Rouen has been called the French Manchester; but it is a very much smaller Manchester; it is a Manchester which is York as well, and in which, even after all modern changes, the York element is likely to seem to the stranger stronger than the Manchester element. And Rouen, though not like Lyons or Marseilles, is in France a city of quite exceptional size. Limoges, with about 50,000 inhabitants, is a more typical example of the old French city which remains an old city, but which has some modern importance as well. It is hard to find an exact English

parallel. Norwich and Lincoln come as near as any, though Norwich is perhaps a little too large, and the modern prosperity of Lincoln is almost too modern. Still both are, like Limoges, ancient and famous cities, which count for something at the present day, though not for so much as Manchester or Lyons. Nottingham and Leicester would rather rank with Rouen than with Limoges; and with them a difference comes in which is of the utmost importance in comparing English and French towns; they are not the seats of bishops.¹

The French local capital thus differs in many things from anything which we are now used to in England. Two hundred years, one hundred years, back, it would have been easier to find a parallel; but even then the parallel would have been far from exact. Many facts both of history and of geography have combined to give a French town of this class an importance in itself which does not belong to the English town of the same class. I have noticed in another place² that, while we are apt to look on France as far more centralized than England, the position, while eminently true in some points, is not true in all. No town in England is now in any real sense a capital, except London. I suspect that no town in England has been a capital for many ages, in the same sense that these old French towns still are capitals. They are centres of administration in a way that an English town is not. We have not, and most of us are thankful that we have not, anything like the prefect, sitting in the capital of the department and settling everything all round him. Many of these towns again are centres of the administration of justice in a way that an English town is not. They have judges and a bar of their own, more after an American than an English fashion. Many of them again are centres of education; the old local universities have perished, and one shrinks from the brand-new academies which have sprung up in their place; still there they are; the higher education is at least supposed to be fixed at many more points in France than it is in England. Lastly, not a few of these towns still remain as social centres, in a way which is now utterly unknown in England. People flock to London; they flock to watering-places; but there is no longer any English town in which the gentry of the surrounding country

¹ No one surely will cavil because a few bishops had their chair at Leicester in the eighth and ninth centuries, or because Nottingham has latterly given a title to a mere suffragan. They are not episcopal sees in the same sense as Lincoln and Norwich.

² 'Impressions of the United States,' p. 217.

keep houses and spend part of the year. This fashion, the rule in Italy, is still common in France. It is the old-standing custom of the land. A decent, sensible French noble, who did not waste his whole time in dangling after the court, divided himself between his *château* in the country and his *hôtel* in the capital of his province or district. Nor has the fashion altogether died out, either among the *noblesse*, where any is left, or among other people. All this is foreign to English ways; we hardly understand the notion of a town-house out of London. And there probably was no time when the custom of dividing oneself between the country and the local capital was so general in England as it even now is in France, to say nothing of Italy. Still it was, even in comparatively late times, far more common than it is now, as many a good old house in our old county-towns shows. But it is significant that the greatest of the class, the palace of the Dukes of Norfolk at Norwich, has utterly vanished. This last, it must be remembered, was a real town-house, like an Italian *palazzo*; it was something quite different from those cases where, often owing to the continued habitation of a castle, the house of a nobleman or wealthy esquire stands close to a town, most commonly a small town which grew up round the castle. These are not town-houses like the Norwich palace, but country-houses with a town at their gates.

We may add another point. In France the civil head of a district is much more usually the ecclesiastical head than it is in England. The dioceses, as a rule, coincide with departments, while English dioceses, as a rule, do not coincide with counties. The bishops' sees, as a rule, but with a much larger number of exceptions, are placed in the head town of the department. It is far less common in France than it is in England to see, as for instance in the three neighbouring departments of Orne, Calvados, and Manche, the chief towns Alençon, Caen, and St. Lo, without bishops, while the bishops' sees are placed at the much smaller towns of Séez, Bayeux, and Coutances. And it is almost unknown in France for great towns to be without bishops, as Birmingham and Leeds are still, as Manchester, Liverpool, and Newcastle, were a few years back. But this last is almost the same thing as to say in other words what has been said already, that the greatest towns in France have commonly had a continuous greatness from the beginning of things.

In all these various ways the old French city is more of a capital, more of a centre, it has more of a life of its own, than

the English county-town. The English town, if it has become a seat of manufactures, has in many things shot ahead of the French city. If it has not grown in that way, it has most likely lagged behind the French city. In neither case is it, like the French city, a real local capital, and not much more. The local capital, containing the town-houses of the local gentry, has ceased in England to have any being at all.

But if from England we go further and take in the whole of Great Britain, we shall find a much nearer parallel to the French city. Edinburgh, smaller than the exceptionally large French cities, is considerably larger than the average of the class. But it has more in common with them than anything in South Britain has. A city of no special commercial or manufacturing importance, which lives largely on its past memories and position, which has its university, its law courts, and many things which still stamp it as a capital and distinguish it from a mere county-town, is very much like one of these French cities on a greater scale. We say on a greater scale, because those French cities which equal or surpass Edinburgh in population, do so by virtue of commerce or manufactures, and so put themselves out of the class of those towns which are local capitals and nothing else.

When we have reached the comparison with Edinburgh, though it is by no means a comparison to be carried into minute detail, we have touched the root of the matter as regards the comparison between English and French towns. Edinburgh is surpassed in size and population by many other towns in Great Britain; yet we feel that there is something about Edinburgh which there is not about the others, simply because Edinburgh has been, and for many purposes still is, the capital of an independent kingdom. So were the old French cities of which we are speaking, capitals, sometimes of kingdoms, in any case of duchies and counties which practically formed independent states. In every respect but this, Edinburgh is not a good parallel to choose; for Edinburgh is not really an ancient city; it is only a comparatively modern capital of Scotland; other towns both of England and Scotland far surpass it in age and in historic dignity. As a fortress, Edinburgh is ancient indeed; as a royal city, it is young, not only beside York and Winchester, but beside Dunfermline and Stirling. We feel almost at a glance that Edinburgh—and for the matter of that, Stirling too—is not a city which has kept its being as a city from time immemorial. It is plainly a town which has grown up round a fortress, a greater

Richmond or Dunster. Still, as a matter of fact, Edinburgh is the one city of Great Britain which carries about it the feeling of being a capital in the strict sense, the head of a land which for many purposes is still distinct. Less venerable in the remote past than York and Winchester, for that very reason it keeps about it the memory of the dignity which in their case is so ancient that it has wholly passed away. Yet from York we cannot see that all special dignity has passed away. The city which unites municipal dignity second only to London with ecclesiastical dignity second only to Canterbury still keeps an unique place in the land.

It is from failing to grasp the history of France and its cities as a living thing that to many it will doubtless seem strange to claim for Le Mans or Poitiers, or even for Lyons and Rouen, the same position as capitals or former capitals which on the face of it belongs to Edinburgh. We are not here concerned with the special story of the growth of the French kingdom, its swallowing up both of its own vassal states and of states which were not even its vassals. We have to take a glance at the history of Gaul from a much wider view. The old city which down to the Revolution fully kept its position as a local capital, from which the Revolution has not been able wholly to take away that character, is, as a rule, immeasurably older than any English town, and it held for ages a place immeasurably greater than the English town ever held. Its history is stamped on the spot itself, on its site and on its buildings. We said that Edinburgh had grown up round a fortress; the French city has not grown up round a fortress; it has grown out of a stronghold, which is quite another matter. This or that Gaulish tribe fixed its central point of meeting and defence—the words *city* and *town* may perhaps be best kept till a later stage—on some point which nature had made a natural centre for meeting and defence. The island or peninsula in a river, the table-land rising high and steep above surrounding hills and dales, above all the strong hill with the river flowing at its foot or, better still, girding three of its sides with its winding stream—on sites like these the old folk of Gaul had fixed their strongholds long before Cæsar came among them. We must not look, as in many parts of Italy, for almost every height to be crowned with a town, however small, fenced in with immemorial walls and bulwarks. Gaul lagged behind Italy in political development; the crowd of towns, independent or united only by a federal tie, had not supplanted the ruder but more lasting

organization of the tribe with its wide territory, and for the most part its single centre. The Roman came; he came not to destroy, but to develope. The Gaulish stronghold, the head of the tribe, itself for the most part became the Roman city; the limits of the tribe became the limits of the jurisdiction of the city. Here and there the site was changed to a neighbouring site. As men long before came down from Dardanië to holy Ilios in the plain, as men long after came down from the elder Salisbury to the younger, so at the Roman bidding, men came down from the stronghold of Bibracte, from the high table-land of Gergovia, to the lower but still fairly lofty sites of Augustodunum whose name still lives in the shortened shape of Autun, of Nemetum whose name has given way to the more picturesque style of the Bright Mount, the Clermont of the preaching of Urban. Here the old sites remain forsaken, like Uleybury looking down from the height of Cotswold, like the fallen walls of Worlebury overhanging the Severn Sea, like the empty ramparts of Norba on the Volscian hills looking down on empty Ninfa at their foot. But far more commonly the old place of meeting and defence remained the place of meeting and defence under the rule of Cæsar. The rude defences of the Gaul gave way to walls raised with all the skill of Roman engineers; the mighty stones in one age, the alternate ranges of brick and stone in another, sometimes tell their tale, how, after days of civil strife or foreign invasion, later Cæsars had to build again what earlier Cæsars had first built. Within and around the walls arose all the buildings, all the works, which the highest civilization of Rome called for. Streets were laid out; public buildings were raised, —the theatre, the basilica, the forum with its surroundings; the proudest site within the walls was hallowed to some patron deity, and the pillared front of the temple crowned and sanctified the height. Without the walls, rising tier above tier from the ground, or wrought, it may be, in some hill-side of convenient shape, the amphitheatre stood ready for the bloody sports which the Roman carried with him alike to the soil of the Gaul and to the soil of the Greek. The arches of the aqueduct bore the needful supply of water from some hill more favoured than that on which the city had arisen. From the gateways, the gateways with their double arches, their flat pilasters, their ranges of windows, such as we see at Nîmes and Autun and in the crowning glory of the Black Gate of Trier, the straight paved road, its distance marked mile by mile, set forth to bind the city to the other cities of the Roman world, to offer an easy path alike to the armed

legionary and to the peaceful merchant. On each side of the path were ranged the tombs of past generations; without the walls, safe, for some ages at least, in the protection of the Roman Peace, gathered the pleasant villas and gardens of Roman settlers and of natives who had become Roman in all but blood. The Roman town had grown in a marvellous way out of the hill-fort or the river-fastness of the Gaul. Very commonly it kept the ancient name of that hill-fort or river-fastness, Lutetia of the Parisii or Durocortum of the Remi. Sometimes it bore a name in which the style of a Roman ruler is strangely fitted with a Celtic ending, Juliomagus, city of the Andecavi, or Augustodunum, city of the Ædui. But in most cases, though not in all, the name of the town itself gives way to the name of the tribe of which it is the head. *Lutetia Parisiorum* becomes *Civitas Parisiorum*, and then in various stages simply *Parisii*, *Parisius*, *Paris*. The tribe, the territory of the tribe, and the town which is the head of the tribe, became hardly distinguishable in Latin speech. In the course of ages the popular dialect came to distinguish town and land by corrupted forms of the tribe name fitted with different endings. The land of the Andecavi becomes Anjou and their city becomes Angers; the land of the Cenomanni becomes Maine, while their city bears the memorable name of Le Mans, city of famous counts and famous bishops, but before all things city of the *commune*.

The days of counts and of *communes*, in the later sense of those words, are still distant; the coming of the age of bishops marks the first great stage in the history of the Gaulish city. The rule of Cæsar still lasts, but the rule of Cæsar is no longer bound up with the worship of the gods of the Roman Capitol. A new creed spreads itself over the land; a persecuted sect comes forth from its hiding-places, to take spiritual, and in some measure temporal possession also, of the Roman world. Gaul, which had given the Church so many martyrs, was not slow in accepting the Christian faith, at least within the walls of her chief cities. Tours and Poitiers had become illustrious in the annals of the Church, while Athens was still almost wholly pagan, while Rome herself was at least as much pagan as Christian. While at Rome the Christian churches grew up in the outskirts of the city, while, even after pagan worship ceased, the pagan temples still stood shut up and empty, in Gaul the zealous bishops of the fourth century supplanted the holy places of the decaying faith by the new holy places of the growing faith. The greatest temple of each city, the home of the patron god, seated commonly on the proudest site

within the walls, gave way to the special church of the bishop, the spiritual centre of that extent of territory which had once marked the possessions of the tribe, which then marked the civil jurisdiction of the city, and which now, without changing its bounds, marked the spiritual jurisdiction of the city's chief pastor. Here comes in one of the great facts of historical geography; the map of Roman Gaul survives, with but few and those simple changes, in the ecclesiastical map of France down to the great Revolution. Within the city itself the temple was changed into the church, or more commonly it supplied the materials for its building. Walls and columns changed places; the shafts which had supported the entablature of the portico which sheltered the dead wall of the *cella* were now taught to come within the shelter of the roof, to part the long nave from its aisles, to bear aloft, perhaps the long drawn cornices of Rome, perhaps the more living arcades of Spalato and Ravenna. The tall campanile was not yet; the display of artistic skill kept almost as wholly within the building as in the elder form of architecture it had kept without. But beside the church, there often arose, though far less universally than under the milder sky of Italy, the distinct baptistery, of which precious examples still linger at Poitiers and Le Puy. The face of the city was thus changed, hardly improved, by the substitution of the long unbroken body of the basilica for the more stately columns of the temple. But the votaries of the new creed found a home within the walls of their seats of worship, such as the votaries of the elder creed had never found within theirs. And around the church arose the dwellings of the bishop and his clergy, a class of men destined to play no small part in the history of the city and of the land.

Next, on the Roman city, now become a Christian city, comes the flood of Teutonic invasion. The rule of the Burgundian and the West-Goth in the South, the rule of the Frank in the North, supplants the rule of Cæsar. The effects of the change differ widely in different parts of the land. In the South, where the Burgundian and the Goth dwell, where the Frank, when his turn comes, commands only from outside, the system of Roman life goes on with far less of change than in the North where the Frank actually settles. But in neither case is the Roman life blotted out; in no city of Gaul are the Roman inhabitants slaughtered, enslaved, or driven out; in no case is the city swept away till its very site is forgotten; in no case are its walls left

standing with no house and no inhabitant within them.¹ The change was great; it was no doubt terrible; but in no case did it amount to an utter break with the past; the city lived on through the storm, keeping its ancient name, and keeping its ancient buildings for later ages gradually to destroy.

There is no time in the life of a Gaulish city when we are left altogether without notices of its history; but there are several centuries during which it is very hard to call up any clear notion of its outward look. We know pretty well how it looked in the fifth century; we know pretty well how it looked in the eleventh; we have abundant surviving remains of the buildings of both those ages. For the long period between them we have little to guide us; the remains of its buildings are few; they are very precious when we light on any. But we know enough to say that the city was still girded by its Roman walls or by walls built in close imitation of the Roman fashion; churches and monasteries arose within and without, built also as nearly as the decaying skill of the time would allow after the same Roman fashion. And, chief of all, in nearly all the great cities, a rival to the bishop's church within the city, on the height or in the island, arose in the shape of the great abbey without the walls, bearing commonly the name of some illustrious and canonized bishop of the see. Saint Ouens at Rouen is an example known to all; within the modern city, within the mediæval wall, it stands outside those clearly marked lines of the Roman *chester* which show how far Rothomagus reached when Saint Ouens first arose. And the bishop's church within, the abbot's church without, the many smaller churches of monasteries and parishes, now begin to add a feature unknown to earlier times, and which has affected the general look of Christian cities and lands more than any other one invention. It is hard to conceive a town of Western Europe or a wide landscape in Western Europe in which the church-tower does not form a main feature. By the end of the time of which we speak, the soaring bell-towers of the churches, tall and slender after the model of Italy, must of themselves have given the cities of Gaul, as of every other western land, a wholly different general look from any that they could have had in the days either of the pagan or of the Christian Roman.

By the eleventh century, and indeed long before the eleventh century, these ancient cities had, as in the old days of the Gaulish

¹ Such a case as that of Jublains (*Diablintes*) in the department of Mayenne is not due to the invasions of the fifth century, but to much earlier warfare.

tribes, again taken their place as heads of independent political bodies. The rule of the Frankish Kings and Emperors had been so utterly broken in pieces, each duchy and county had won so complete a practical independence, that the head city of each fairly ranks as a capital. It was the head of a district which had a separate being; it was the seat of a prince who, whatever might be his formal dependence on a higher lord, practically exercised all the rights of an independent sovereign. And along with these there was growth of another kind, the growth of the communal spirit, which, though it never raised the French towns to the rank of independent commonwealths like those of Italy, yet won for them large municipal privileges and gave birth to a vigorous and abiding municipal life. The mediæval history of these cities now begins; they put on the outward shape of which we everywhere see greater or less traces. The three elements, the Church, the prince, the civic body, flourish side by side, and each, in its way, helps to increase the outward splendour of the city. The head church and the smaller churches with their attached buildings are enlarged or rebuilt, sometimes over and over again, in the varying taste of successive centuries. The castle of the duke or count rises, sometimes to be supplanted by, sometimes to see growing up by its side, the more peaceful palace, with its clustering turrets, its stately hall, the tall, short, mass of its *sainte chapelle* rising perhaps over every other part of the princely dwelling. Municipal and other civil buildings arise; the *hôtel de ville*, the palace of justice, the houses, built in the style of successive ages from the Romanesque of Le Mans to the advanced Gothic of Jacques Cœur at Bourges, the dwellings of wealthy merchants, of nobles who have one of their homes within the head city of their province, all gathering around the two crowning objects of all, the church of the bishop and the castle or palace of the count or duke. And the extent of the city grows; it is an exceptional case when Autun, like Rome in later days, shrinks up from within the compass of her walls. As a rule, the model is Rome in an earlier stage, when the wall of Servius became too narrow and when the wall of Aurelian was needed to fence in the new extent of the full-grown city. The Roman wall ceases to be the boundary of the city; perhaps it vanishes altogether, leaving only the indelible impress of the *chester*, the camp with its four limbs, or that part of the city which the wall once girded. A new wall arises, fencing in the suburbs which have grown outside the older defences, a process which in some cases has been repeated

more than once. These later walls have commonly given way to modern *boulevards*; here and there a city, like Chartres, keeps all or part of these comparatively modern gates and bulwarks. But the Roman wall does not always wholly perish. Sometimes, as at Sens, it remains as a wall, all beyond being still suburb. Sometimes, as at Evreux and Bourges, it has been worked into later buildings; at Bourges its round bastions serve happily as bases for the turrets of the house of Jacques Cœur and for the apse of a chapel near the metropolitan church. In the most interesting cases of all, the old city, within its protecting wall, lives on and keeps its own name and its own being, while a new fortified enclosure arises beside or below it. There is *la cité*, the immemorial capital, the ecclesiastical and aristocratic quarter, and there is *la ville*, the modern dwelling-place of upstart burghers. Most of the best examples of this last growth are beyond the bounds of the French kingdom—kingdom we can still hardly help saying; empire and commonwealth are as yet hardly geographical names. But it is by no means unknown within the kingdom. It is to be seen at Limoges; it is to be seen far better in the wonderful city of Le Puy. There is still the *cité* on the height of the rock, with no small remnants of the walls that fenced in that marvellous church, raised high on soaring arches, with the dwellings of priests and nobles around it. There is the lowlier *ville*, home of burghers and friars, gathering at the foot and on the slopes of the hill. One almost wonders that one does not find, as at Chur and at Syra, one form of worship practised at the top of the hill and another at the bottom.

Thus our French city grew. One by one the duchies and counties ceased to be independent; a variety of processes united them to the crown of Paris; their head cities ceased to be capitals of states, of powers with full political life. But they did not cease to be capitals. The duke or count often went on, still holding his castle or palace, still keeping his court as the centre of the local nobility; for such purposes it mattered but little that the duke was no longer a vassal sovereign, but a prince of the royal house holding the duchy as an appanage. Even where this state of things never existed or after it had passed away, the city by no means lost its character of a capital. The system of the old monarchy, highly centralized on one side, was the opposite to centralized on the other. The change was not so much that each duchy and county was merged in the kingdom as that the king took the place of each separate duke and count. The city remained a

capital; a local centre of society, administration, education, and law, for the land attached to it, in a way that we may safely say that the English city or county town never was.

Then comes the havoc of revolution and the later havoc of modern improvement. It is grievous to take an old description, an old picture, of a French city, and to see what has perished—walls, castles, houses, above all churches. But, after all, the real wonder is, not that so much is gone, but that anything is left. In the matter of churches, there is one striking difference between an English and a French town. Our first impression is that a French town has much finer churches than an English one. To some extent this is true, and the difference is the result of the greater local importance of the French cities. But to a great extent also the appearance simply comes of the fact that in England, owing to the circumstances of our history, the monastic churches have largely perished, while the parish churches have commonly lived on. In France, when religion was restored after the storm, when some, but not all, of the churches were restored to religious uses, it was naturally the larger and finer ones, commonly monastic or collegiate, that were set up again, while the parish churches, smaller and less stately, have very often vanished.

Such has been the course of a French local capital, from the Gaulish hill-fort to the modern city, flourishing or decaying, it may be, according to a modern standard, but in any case keeping about it large traces of its ancient history, its ancient dignity. There are other classes of French towns, as there are other classes of English towns; but it is these old capitals which form the most instructive contrast with that class of English towns which comes nearest to their likeness. The difference goes up to the very root of our history. Exeter, almost alone among English towns, has lived through all stages of the history of the island. By the time the Saxon conqueror reached it, he had become a conqueror no more destructive than the Frank or rather than the Goth. In most cases the history of English towns is the best witness to the contrast between the history of Gaul and of Britain in all ages. A crowd of the English local capitals, if we can call them capitals, have no claim to British or Roman origin at all. They are of English origin in the strictest sense; they are Anglian or Saxon settlements, homes of communities, which some accident of history, the foundation of some fortress, of some monastery, caused to grow from villages into cities. And among

towns which can trace up their origin to the Roman or even to the Briton, it is often hard to prove continuous occupation from Roman or British times. Of all English towns that which has the best claim to a continuous life from Roman days is Colchester, *Camulodunum*. But compared with Poitiers or Le Mans, the history of Colchester seems cut short at both ends. It was a Roman colony, but it was not a *primaeval* British settlement; it remains an English borough; but it has never been a bishopric; for ages at least it has not been the head of a shire. The cause of all this is the simple fact that the Angle and the Saxon were conquerors of quite another kind from the Goth or even from the Frank, the fact that there is a gap between modern England and Roman Britain, while there is no gap between modern France and Roman Gaul. But later causes have helped also to strengthen the difference. And it is not unpleasant to remember, when we see that our old towns are in many things inferior to the old towns of many other lands, that whatever is taken from each particular place is added to the whole kingdom. Why does both the princely and the civic element show itself in greater splendour in a French than in an English city? Simply because in England the kingdom was more united, because the general government was stronger, because the English earl or bishop was not an independent prince, nor the English city an independent commonwealth. Why are the grand town-houses of nobles and rich merchants so much more common in French than in English towns? Because in England a man could live in safety in a peaceful manor-house, in a house in an unwall'd village, in ages when in France none but the master of a strong castle was safe beyond the walls of the fortified town. And in one point we may fairly boast that English cities have a marked superiority over French. As to the comparative merits of the great churches of the two lands—remembering that, in this matter, Normandy goes with England and not with France—the question is largely a matter of taste. An English and a French minster aim at different ideals, and their beauties are of different kinds. But there can be no doubt that the ecclesiastical quarter of an English city—the close, the precinct, the college, the abbey—has a distinct charm of its own. It has a separate being in a way which is seldom—it would be dangerous to say never—found in France, where the cathedral or other great church is so much more commonly encroached on by mean secular buildings. Here again we have a historic cause. In the immemorial city, where the bishopric

was as old as the early Christian Empire, there was no room for a distinct ecclesiastical quarter like that of Wells or Lichfield, where the city simply grew round the church, or even where, as at Norwich or Chichester, the bishop made his way into an existing city, but came in as a great potentate, almost as a conqueror. In short, the differences between the normal English and the normal French town, taking as the types of each the class of towns which most nearly answer to one another in the two countries, the differences, even those that are seen at the first glance, are great and many. And the causes of those differences lie very deep indeed in the comparative history of the two lands. They are caused above all by their widely different fates in the age when Britain received the settlements of the Jute, the Saxon, and the Angle, and when Gaul received the settlements of the Goth, the Burgundian and the Frank.

EDWARD A. FREEMAN.

Grey Tower of Dalmeny.

THE lovers are whispering under thy shade,
 Grey tower of Dalmeny !

I leave them and wander alone in the glade
 Beneath thee, Dalmeny !

Their thoughts are of all the bright years coming on,
 But mine are of days and of dreams that are gone ;
 They see the fair flowers Spring has thrown on the grass,
 And the clouds in the blue light their eyes as they pass ;
 But my feet are deep down in a drift of dead leaves,
 And I hear what they hear not, a lone bird that grieves.
 What matter ? the end is not far for us all,
 And spring, through the summer, to winter must fall,
 And the lovers' light hearts, e'en as mine, will be laid,
 At last, and for ever, low under thy shade,
 Grey tower of Dalmeny !

GEORGE MILNER.

My Paris Masters.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'REATA.'

CHAPTER I.

'GUSTAV,' said my uncle to me one evening, 'your habits are becoming daily more obnoxious; when will you begin to understand that the chalk is there for writing down sums, and not for drawing faces; that a linendraper's shop is not a studio, and a counter not an easel?'

'Uncle,' was my reply, 'I can bear it no longer!' My uncle looked at me over his spectacles and stroked his smooth chin. We were sitting in the back shop after closing hours; our sausage supper was demolished, but the perfume still lingered in the air. This sausage scent was one of the things which made life hard to me; as was also the despairing neatness of the linen bales, ranged around us on all sides, upon shelves which reached to the ceiling, and marked with such mystical signs as H.B., H.B.B., or H.B.C., &c. I had a secret hankering after the poetical elements of life—my uncle was prose personified.

'Gustav,' said my uncle, '*Einbildung!*'

With this simple formula, which signifies imagination or fancy, he had hitherto succeeded in crushing my poetic yearnings, or at least their outward expression. But to-day the cup was full; I had been forced to measure out fifty yards of linen for a young couple starting in life, and either the bridegroom's happy face or my own aching arms had made me rebellious.

'Gustav,' said my uncle, leaning back, with his hands clasped on his stomach, and his thumbs twirling round each other—'what is it you cannot bear longer? Is it the linen, or the *kleine Base* (little cousin) being away?'

Of course the second reason was the true one, so I answered without hesitation 'The linen,' and then felt myself grow turkey-cock red up to my sandy hair-roots.

'*Einbildung*, Gustav, *Einbildung*,' said my uncle, twirling his thumbs rather faster than before. 'She will come back again sure enough. I don't believe any harm will come to the

girl, even if she has taken it into her head to hide herself from us at present. It is hard upon a chit of a thing like that to be left to the charge of a stepmother who—well, yes, who beats her; but she might have come to me for advice, instead of taking French leave this way, and becoming a nine days' wonder.'

'But I said it was the linen,' I sheepishly replied.

'Ah, yes, h—m! to be sure, the linen—*Einbildung!*'

'Uncle!' I burst out, 'let me go to Paris!'

'To look for *die kleine Base*? Why, we don't even know if she really is there.'

'No, not to look for anything or anybody, but to become a painter.'

'There is only one sort of painter indispensable to civilisation,' replied my uncle, 'and that is the one who supplies our sign-boards. But rather than that my counter should continue to be thus daily disfigured, and my chalk rubbed into formless lumps that I can scarcely hold between my fingers, I shall let you go to Paris.'

Thus, to my unspeakable delight, it was settled. Inquiries were made and arrangements undertaken. I bought a dictionary and an Ollendorff, and began to rub up the stock of French which fortunately I already possessed, for my uncle had long since destined me to represent the travelling portion of the linen firm. A new suit of clothes, considered by the dress authorities of the town to have a Parisian appearance, was ordered for me; a certain number of yards of linen off the most sacred shelf, marked H.B.B., was measured out for my especial use, and sewed into shirts. It was with a fluttering heart that, all arrangements complete, I surveyed myself in the glass.

When a linendraper's apprentice has got yearnings towards the poetical and the artistic, his nose ought at least to be straight, and his eyes fiery black or tender blue. Now my eyes were of no particular colour, and my nose of no particular shape. I was big and broad, and I believe that I could have knocked down an ox as easily as most youths of twenty-two. But truth forces me to add that neither in my bigness nor my breadth was there any particular fascination or grace. I had the unfortunate habit of blushing at the smallest provocation, and, unless armed with a yard measure or a piece of chalk, I was in a continual puzzle as to what I should do with my hands.

Nevertheless, I surveyed myself in the glass to-day with a sort of modest satisfaction, and with a comforting reliance on the proverb which says that it is the clothes which make the man.

On the morning of my departure my uncle held me a speech, which I had noticed him writing down beforehand, during the intervals between serving customers. The reader may, perhaps, ere this, have heard mention of the dangers of capitals, the foolish trustfulness of youth, and the wiles of tempters, so I will spare him now. I shed tears as I listened.

'Gustav,' concluded my uncle, 'you are starting with a recommendation to two of the most brilliant geniuses of Paris; it is by a stroke of fortune that my friend Pinselmann should be able to claim the honour of their acquaintance, and be willing to favour you with his intercession. I am told that these two accomplished artists, who are as inseparable as brothers, present a truly touching picture of disinterested friendship; they divide everything between them, even to their inspirations, which I take to mean good ideas or lucky hits. Set them up as your examples; do as they do, and you may yet become the adornment of your native town.'

Then my uncle took me by the two shoulders, looked for a few seconds into my eyes, placed a kiss symmetrically on the centre of each of my cheeks, blinked his eyelids rather fast several times running, and walked back into the shop, slamming the door behind him, and muttering to himself: '*Einbildung, Einbildung, Einbildung!*'

As I walked towards the station I snivelled a little. I was in a soft and tearful humour altogether, and felt almost kindly disposed towards the linen trade, and almost capable of pressing a linen bale to my heart.

When the train had whirled me off, these sensations subsided. The endless shelves, with their H.B.'s and H.B.B.'s, vanished from my mental sight, and in their place there arose another vision—a girl's face, a pair of blue eyes, a pair of flaxen plaits. Should I ever see them again in reality?

I have given the reader several opportunities of observing that I was madly in love with *die kleine Base*; but as for the little cousin herself, I had never let her guess that fact. I was still at that early and agonising stage of the passion which is popularly known as 'calf-love.' Calf-love is either very demonstrative or very reticent; my state answered to the second description. I used to lie awake at night, making combinations how to meet her 'by chance' on my evening walk next day; and then when my combinations were about to be crowned, and I had spent the best part of an hour dodging behind a hedge, or crouching

in the vicinity of an ant-hill, some unaccountable impulse would make me walk off whistling in the opposite direction when I perceived her approach.

Once she had expressed a wish for eating crayfish. It was not a poetical wish, but it inspired me. In cold blood I left the shop unguarded, and fished for crayfish in the little stream outside the town. My sport was blest, as forbidden sport usually is; I landed five splendid specimens. It is true that my right hand was severely bitten, that my coat-sleeve was drenched, and that my uncle boxed my ears when I returned; but these circumstances failed to damp my spirits. It was only when the moment for presenting them to my cousin approached that the old imbecility came over me. Her visit was announced for the afternoon, and for fear lest she should think that I had taken all that trouble for her sake, I ate two of the crayfish myself, and threw the others over the garden wall. When she caught sight of the claws on my plate, and reproached me with not having kept any for her, I called her greedy and childish; and the moment she was gone, I shut myself into my room and spent an hour in deciding whether I should jump from the window, or hang myself on the ring which occupied the centre of the ceiling. Fortunately the ring was obviously unequal to my weight, and several cases of newly-arrived linen which stood in the courtyard under my window deterred me from the second alternative. My brains might *not* have been dashed out had I fallen on one of these, and I shrank from surviving in a crippled shape.

It was not long after the crayfish affair that my flaxen-haired Hilda had run away from home. She had given no hint of her intentions either to my uncle or me; she had made no complaints of her stepmother's treatment; only for some weeks her face had grown paler, and her eyes more serious; and one fine morning we heard that she had vanished. For the first few days the disappearance was complete; then there arrived a few lines addressed to my uncle, assuring him that she was safe, and solemnly asserting that the first sign of a search would cause her to put an end to her life. The postmark on the envelope was of a small town on the frontier of Germany, one of the stations on the way to Paris; and, pondering over this circumstance, together with many casual remarks she had made in old days, I had convinced myself that if ever she was to be found, Paris was the place.

I employed the time of my journey in laying my plans for the future. These plans were simple: they were only to obtain

fame as a painter, to find my cousin, and bring her home with a fortune to lay at her feet. The plan had looked simple in the quiet of my uncle's back shop; it still looked comparatively simple in the railway carriage; but when once I found myself plunged in the whirl of clatter and glitter, of dashing carriages and hurrying foot-passengers which people call Paris, my ideas began to grow less distinct; and all I remained conscious of was a desire not to lose hold of my own identity, not to be swept aside by this sparkling torrent of life for which my wildest expectations had not prepared me.

On the morning after my arrival I had recovered myself sufficiently to ask my way to the lodging of my future masters, the two brilliant geniuses whose torch was to illuminate my path to Art. I will not say how often I asked my way before reaching my destination, but I did reach it at last.

The locality in which the genius-friends lived was remote. After threading some half-dozen extremely ill-smelling streets, I recognised at the entrance of the worst-smelling of the number the directions on the letter of recommendation which I carried tightly clasped in my hand. Knowing nothing of the habits of geniuses, except that they are eccentric, I scarcely thought it strange that such accomplished artists should choose to inhabit this neighbourhood. When I came to house No. 53, which was my destination, my heart began to beat tumultuously; I trod with reverence on the mutilated bricks which paved the entrance, and even on the carrot-parings which strewed the ground with unstudied grace.

The first person I met was a washerwoman, who, however, looked far from washed herself. From this person I inquired in a tremulous voice where lived the painters, Messieurs Laniche et Fourchon. '*Plus haut!*' was the rejoinder, and she pointed with a stick of washing-soap above her head.

After this I mounted several staircases, knocked at several doors, and frightened off several rats who were feeding on the vegetable-parings which seemed to have been strewed broadcast over the house, as flowers are strewed at a procession, and always the word sounded: '*Plus haut!*'

At last it seemed as if I could go no higher. There was, it is true, still one flight of stairs above me, but it led obviously to the attics, and I did not suppose that my masters lived there. That somebody lived there was evident, for a smell of roast onions floated from the invisible regions, and the snatch of what struck

me as a rather doubtful song was being sung in a clear voice. I was about to descend the stairs in despair, when the song above me suddenly broke off amidst a clattering and hissing noise, and somebody said: 'Look to the onions, Jérôme, they are on the ground.'

This decided me. Jérôme was the Christian name of one of my two masters. I began to ascend the stairs, lost in wonder at the strange fancies of genius.

Just as I reached the landing, an open door was hastily slammed shut; it was the only door visible, so timidly I approached and knocked. A voice, speaking through the keyhole, asked me what I wanted, and in halting tones I explained the reason of my appearance. There was a moment's whispered consultation behind the door; then it was opened for about a quarter of an inch, two fingers were protruded, and the letter was asked for.

Several minutes passed, while I paced the tiny landing. First there was dead silence in the room, broken only by the rustle of paper; then some excited whispers passed, then hurrying steps, followed by a series of curious and incomprehensible sounds. The hissing noise, which had continued unbroken till now, gradually died away as if the cause of it had been removed to some further region; then came one or two strokes as of a broom on the floor, accompanied by a choking sound which suggested laughter. Then, in a stage whisper, I heard:

'There are two more under the press, Jérôme.' After that came the scraping noise of something heavy being pushed across the floor. Somebody said: 'What shall I put over it?' and the answer was, 'The Egyptian cloak will do.' A rustle of silk, a little more clattering, a pause, and at last the door was opened, and a very agreeable voice said:

'On vous prie d'entrer.'

The first thing which I experienced on following this request was an overpowering smell of turpentine varnish, which completely drowned the onion scent. I have since come to the conclusion that the varnish bottle had been broken in cold blood, with the purpose of effecting a complete transformation in the atmosphere of the room.

'Pray take place,' said the person who had opened the door, waving his hand with the ease of an emperor and the grace of a Greek god towards a rush-bottomed chair which stood draped in what I then took to be a cast-off comforter, but which I have since learned to reverence under the title of 'The Syrian scarf.' 'Pray take place, *sur ce fauteuil ou sur le canapé*, if you prefer.'

I looked at the *canapé*; but observing that one of its feet was out of the perpendicular, that the contents of half a paint-box had recently been spilt over its surface, and that, moreover, most of the unencumbered part was occupied by a full-grown, grinning skeleton, I bashfully chose the chair.

‘I see by this letter,’ began the young Frenchman—he looked scarcely older than myself, and I at once put him down as genius No. 2—‘that you desire to be instructed by my friend and myself; but I can give you no definite answer without his consent. I shall see whether he is disengaged at this moment, *avec votre permission*;’ and, with a slight inclination of the head which months of study would not have enabled me to copy, he walked to the door of the adjoining room and disappeared.

Startled, yet fascinated, I sat still on my *fauteuil*. The effrontery of my host took my breath away, but his smile had gained my heart. Profiting by the opportunity, I cast a hasty glance around me. The space was rather sparsely lighted; not from any deficiency in the position of the window, which, indeed, commanded all the neighbouring roofs, but because a piece of bleached green silk had been pinned across the lower panes. The sloping ceiling proclaimed to me that I was in a garret; as for the rest, however, my notions remained tolerably hazy. An easel leant against the wall, another was planted in the centre of the room, with a sheet of drawing on it, veiled in the folds of a dirty towel flung over the paper. It struck me also that there were a great many pieces of drapery in the room, disposed in unexpected and improbable places, and assuming strange shapes, which they could only have adopted from the objects they covered. In the very centre of the room stood a wooden lay-figure, wrapped from chin to toes in a piece of yellow damask, which still showed portions of red fringe at the edge. I concluded that one of the two geniuses was occupied with some subject from the Bible.

Just as I had settled this point in my mind the door opened again, and there entered my former acquaintance, accompanied by another man, who held my letter open in his hand.

Genius No. 1 was the older of the two by a few years, but only by a few years; he may have been twenty-eight or twenty-nine. His complexion and hair were both darker than the others, and his face was more deeply furrowed by lines, which instinctively, I felt, must proceed from some other cause than age.

‘Monsieur Bertrand Laniche, Monsieur Gustave Leegold,’ said the younger man, with one of his incomparable waves of the

hand; and in the next minute I found myself again seated on my rush-bottomed chair, straight in face of the two Frenchmen, and vainly trying to appear unembarrassed by my hands. The ease with which my new masters managed theirs, although they had no visible occupation to turn them to, was to me tantalising and mysterious. They both wore velveteen coats, from which the original pile had disappeared at most places, and my experienced eye at once detected that the linen of their shirts had never come off a bale marked H.B.B.—scarcely even H.B.—but for all that, and despite my brand-new, scrupulously brushed clothes, despite even the well-fitted cigar case in my pocket, I felt at a disadvantage before them.

‘Monsieur Leegold desires to do us the honour of becoming our pupil,’ said the artist called Bertrand Laniche, in a deep and impressive voice, on which Monsieur Jérôme Fourchon, the younger one, broke in with his flute-like treble and his angelic smile:

‘He is warmly recommended, Bertrand; will you not reconsider your resolution, and make it possible for us to receive him?’

I perceived with dismay that my acceptance had already been thrown into doubt, and, with a blush, so burning that it sent the tears to my eyes, I murmured something about my devotion to art.

‘*L’Art*,’ said Laniche, clearing his throat, ‘*L’Art c’est une maîtresse jalouse*. Are you prepared to labour in her service? To labour, not to trifle and dally with her playthings, *les joujoux qu’elle nous jette?*’

The metaphor was beyond me, but the deep voice and serious gaze of Laniche impressed me to a degree that no metaphor could have done. I explained that I wished for nothing better than earnest work under an earnest instructor.

Messieurs Laniche and Fourchon hemmed and hawed a little longer, hinted at the valuable nature of their time, and the pressing number of their engagements, until I felt my heart slowly sinking towards my boots; but at last Laniche seemed to be struck with an idea; for, turning towards Jérôme, he suggested:

‘How would it be if we put off the *Marquis* in order to favour Monsieur Leegold?’

‘It would be hard upon the *Marquis*,’ replied Jérôme gravely; ‘he is most punctual in his attendance.’

‘And in his payments,’ finished Laniche.

‘Exactly,’ said Jérôme, ‘though that is a secondary consideration.’

It might have been by chance that both pairs of eyes turned towards me at that moment; but something inspired me to say warmly:

‘I shall be as punctual as the Marquis, both in attendance and in payment, for my uncle has been most liberal in his provisions.’

The angelic smile suddenly reappeared on Jérôme’s face, and even the eyes of the grave Laniche appeared to brighten. In a few minutes it was settled that the Marquis should be sacrificed to me.

‘We shall begin to-morrow,’ said Laniche presently; ‘I shall make a selection among our models. What do you say, Jérôme; shall we start Monsieur with the antique classes, or begin with models from the French school?’

‘The question shall be considered,’ said Jérôme, looking hard at me, as though to read where my abilities lay.

‘I trust the staircase does not inconvenience you?’ said Laniche, turning to me suavely, ‘but we affect this situation on account of the light. We are above the multitude here, Monsieur Leegold.’

I agreed almost enthusiastically.

‘There is one other small circumstance,’ said Laniche, as I rose to take my leave, and he set to examining his finely-shaped nails rather closely, ‘no more than a matter of form; but it is against our practice to accept pupils without payment in advance.’

‘For the charges of a month,’ threw in Jérôme.

‘For the charges of a quarter,’ finished Laniche, with a severe glance at his fellow-artist. ‘Our terms are three francs per day, which include free use of the models, excepting such damages as they may suffer at your hands. That comes to ninety francs a month, two hundred and seventy francs for the quarter.’

‘Two hundred and seventy francs!’ I repeated, with something like a gasp.

‘I see you are surprised,’ said Laniche; ‘you were no doubt not prepared for this lowness of terms; but *que voulez-vous?* Times are bad for Art.’

I still felt somewhat staggered; but I remembered the sacrificed Marquis and drew out my purse. When I closed it again one of the compartments was empty; and my only comfort was the reflection that my path to Art was clear for three months. Besides, though the sum in a lump had alarmed me, three francs was really not much for a lesson which lasted as long as the daylight.

So, after stumbling over various objects at my feet, and twice

overtopping the yellow-draped lay-figure which obstructed the passage, and which Jérôme put straight again with the utmost good humour, I managed to bow myself out of the presence of my instructors.

It may have been *Einbildung*, but certainly as I closed the door behind me I heard something like a speechless scuffle, which gave me the impression that my two instructors had rushed into each other's arms, and were embracing each other in a transport of some emotion which I knew not how to explain.

CHAPTER II.

PUNCTUAL to the minute, I knocked at the attic door next morning. My night had been disturbed; a feverish excitement had kept me awake, longing for the hour which should mark my first step on the road to Art.

After a short delay the door was opened; Laniche, in rather deep *négligé*, received me politely. The strip of green silk had been taken from the window, but the various other indescribable pieces of drapery were still disposed about the room, just as they had been yesterday. The lay-figure stood still muffled in its yellow rag. Upon the corner of one of the tables, which had evidently been cleared with some difficulty, stood the plaster model of a foot with one toe and part of the heel gone.

'*Notre premier modèle*,' explained Laniche, not in the least disconcerted by the want of the toe; and after pulling a sheet of paper from under several portfolios, he hunted round the room for a piece of charcoal, and proceeded, with a rapidity which made my brain reel, to dash off a sketch of the foot in question. With a dozen strokes he had reproduced the general effect, while I stood by, awe-struck and dumb, and becoming with every stroke more reconciled to the expenditure of my two hundred and seventy francs.

As for the loss of the toe, Laniche explained that it was of no consequence whatever; that, in fact, by reason of giving more scope to the imagination, it was to be considered more of an advantage than otherwise. It was the Marquis who had broken it, it appeared. Then the accomplished artist showed me how to hold my chalk, mentioned the Latin names of a few bones belonging to the structure of the human foot, which impressed me deeply, and which he called grounding me in anatomy,

declared that he saw germs of talent in the first tremulous stroke which I applied to the paper, and then retired into the next room, where I distinctly heard him getting back into bed.

About two hours later Jérôme made his appearance, looking rather heavy about the eyes. After wishing me good-morning, in a somewhat subdued tone, he came and looked over my shoulder, remarked that my drawing suggested chilblains, and rubbed out two of the criticised toes without substituting any others. After this he appeared to forget my existence, and busied himself with rummaging through portfolios, alternately spilling their contents, swearing a little, and then picking them up again.

On the whole I was not dissatisfied with my first day in the studio; I had learnt two Latin words, and had the satisfaction of knowing that what I had hitherto called my ankle was really termed—but no, I have long since forgotten my grounding in anatomy, and my memory is a blank, even as to the Latin for my little toe.

It is true, that by evening there remained of my original drawing nothing but two sister-toes, orphaned of the foot they belonged to; but then, though my paper might be poor in lines, how rich was not my mind in experience! I felt that I could grapple with the foot in quite a different spirit next day.

When next day came I found the attic door locked, and half an hour passed before any response came to my modest taps. At last the door was opened, apparently by Jérôme, who, however, bolted back into the inner chamber as soon as the key was turned, and informed me through the chink that I had nothing to do but to go on with the plaster foot, *le pied d'Hercule*, he called it; but I doubt whether Hercules had anything to do with it.

'*Vous trouverez tout,*' he said, as he vanished from my sight.

I *did* find everything—does not Bible-teaching say that he who searches finds? At the end of half an hour I discovered the foot of Hercules serving as prop to a rickety picture-stand, which, without this crutch, limped piteously; but, alas! my two sister-toes I never saw again. However, I had grown bold enough to help myself to paper at my own discretion, and to take chalk and charcoal where I could find it, and with the pigheaded perseverance of my race I set out again upon the round of four toes and a half which at present was the aim of my ambition.

That day was to me a melancholy one; I experienced several shocks, due to my curiosity alone, for during the hours that elapsed before either of my instructors appeared, I foolishly lifted

the draperies which had seemed to me so mysterious. Under a strip of red velvet I discovered to my affright a row of bottles, five empty and one full one, all marked '*Cognac*'; in one corner, with a piece of tattered lace flung over them, I found a roulette board and a heap of dirty cards, lying higgledy-piggledy upon each other. But my sensitive nature suffered most when I threw back the yellow rag, respectively '*Egyptian cloak*,' veiling the figure which, till then, I had taken to represent some Biblical character. I perceived now that this wooden model, whose joints were pliable, was precariously poised on one toe; and adding this circumstance to the shortness of the pink muslin skirts which met my gaze, I had no difficulty in divining that the creature was standing for a ballet-girl.

The discovery so upset me that my next two toes suffered severely in the execution.

Laniche did not appear at all that day; Jérôme looked in occasionally and let drop some vague but encouraging remarks.

On the third day, and for many days afterwards, the door was left unlocked for my convenience, and also for that of my masters. During the first half of the day I worked generally in solitude. The *atelier* and all its contents was left entirely at my mercy; I might have filled my pockets with oil-paints, or stuffed my sleeves with sketches at my discretion; and nothing but my conscience stood in the way of my carrying off the lay-figure, or eloping with the skeleton, any day of the week. The indescribable pieces of drapery, though they still went by such names as '*Syrian scarf*,' '*Turkish sash*,' or '*Indian veil*,' were now no longer so carefully disposed; the bottles stood unmasked, and even the ballet-girl, scorning concealment, stood poised on one toe before my eyes. The *Marquis*, who had done much service at first, was now less frequently alluded to; the *couplets* were sung before me, the onions were fried under my nose, and I was even invited to partake of them.

After the first shock, the successive stages by which I descended from the ideal representation I had made to myself of my masters were rapid. Oh! innocent, innocent uncle Leegold! with your experience, as dull as the shelves in your back shop, and as spotless as the linen you daily measure out, had I obeyed your parting injunction, and done as they did, I might perhaps have ended by adorning the jails of my native town, but scarcely its social life. And yet the description had not been quite false; the affection which these two men bore to each other was genuinely

true; it was true also that they divided everything, even to my cigars, whenever I was foolish enough to leave my case unguarded on the table.

The days passed in great sameness. About twelve, or a little later, my two masters would appear, one after the other, with bloodshot eyes and ashy complexions. The first move was generally to call for a *siphon*; then, if Laniche happened to be in a particularly laborious frame of mind, he would employ two hours in pointing three pieces of chalk, or Jérôme would hunt rats with a broom. And I must not here forget to mention that the foot of Hercules came to a wretched end, in consequence of being shied across the room at a rat that showed itself in broad daylight.

But these were exceptional cases. More generally the two accomplished artists would each sit in a corner, in a sort of sullen stupor, absolutely indifferent to their surroundings, and apparently still half asleep. Somewhere about the middle of the afternoon they would suddenly wake up, and laying hold of chalk or charcoal, paint or pencil, or anything that happened to be within reach, they would dash off sketches of subjects which, to use a mild expression, belonged to the flippant order of Art. Then, with these sketches under their arms, they would disappear for the rest of the afternoon, and occasionally reappear without the sketches, but with a suggestive chink about their pockets, or half a ham and a bottle of brandy for supper. I do not know whether either of them answered in any way to the word 'genius;' but that this pair of irreclaimable rakes possessed between them talent enough to set up half a dozen ordinary men there is no denying.

After the first few days they did not pay much attention to my presence. If I could find chalk for myself it was my luck; if not, *tant pis*. They conversed, as it were, over my head, while I struggled, as best I could, with the Herculean toes, or with the 'hand of Apollo,' to which I was in time advanced. As for the style and subjects of their conversation, there was much that bewildered me; my inexperience was extreme, so perhaps it was only natural that my hair—and it was lanky hair—should occasionally stand on end as I listened to the thrilling tales of adventure with which they enlivened their hours of labour.

From portions of their talk I gathered that they had each lately sent a painting to the *Salon*, and as the critical day approached on which the names of the accepted pictures were to be made known, a fever came over them both. At every sound in

the house, or step on the staircase, Jérôme would rush across the room and burst open the door, only to return discomfited.

At last one morning, as I was working alone as usual, and thinking rather more of blue eyes and flaxen plaits than of plaster fingers—for I cannot deny that my artistic thirst had begun to abate—I was startled by Jérôme storming into the room through the outer door (I do not suppose that he had been home all night) and shouting at the top of his voice :

‘Accepted! accepted, Bertrand! accepted!’

Laniche appeared at the noise, and asked, ‘Yours or mine?’

‘Mine!’ screamed Jérôme, throwing himself into his friend’s arms; and for full two minutes they hugged and let go, and hugged and let go, until I feared that utter exhaustion must follow. There was not the smallest trace of envy in Laniche’s manner towards the younger man; the acceptance was regarded evidently as a piece of equal good luck to both, and I confess that this remark tended somewhat to soften the loss of my two hundred and seventy francs, which I was beginning to acknowledge had been a vain expenditure.

After this it was foolish of me to try and obtain a hearing upon the question of the curve of a finger; both artists were in far too jubilant a state of mind even to understand me. In answer to my question they merely pressed me to their hearts, and went off arm-in-arm, singing playful airs, and not reappearing in the studio for three whole days.

When they did reappear their voices were husky and their hands shaky; but, after a night’s rest, it seemed as if a reaction were going to take place in the spirit of the successful artist. He had got hold of a newspaper with a critique of the paintings exhibited, and, amongst others, of his own. Although admitted to the Salon, it was here severely censured, not so much on account of the execution, which was even alluded to as ‘promising,’ but because of the choice of the subject, which was called ‘vicious;’ and there followed a tirade upon the degeneracy of public morals and of artistic taste. I never ascertained precisely what were the subjects of Jérôme’s accepted and of Laniche’s rejected pictures, but I have since heard that of Jérôme mentioned as ‘*le moins frivole des deux*.’

After reading this article, Jérôme was very quiet for about an hour, and sat dreamily biting his finger-nails, and passing his hand through his curly crop of hair. At last, twisting himself round in his chair, he addressed Laniche, who had been occupied

with pulling threads out of what remained of fringe on the Egyptian mantle.

'*Ecoute*, Bertrand, I have an idea.'

'*Eh bien?*' grunted the other.

'I am going to give the lie to that fellow who declares that my inspirations are grovelling; I am going to paint the most moral picture, comparatively moral, that is to say, that you can imagine. I give you three guesses at my subject.'

'*Mon petit chat*, child and kitten at play,' suggested Laniche, grimly. But Jérôme was in no humour for jokes; without waiting for the other two guesses he announced that the subject he had chosen was Faust and Gretchen.

'I fancy I have seen it treated once or twice before,' said Laniche, who was in a sarcastic mood.

'But never as I shall treat it,' explained Jérôme, rising in his excitement. 'Hackneyed? Nonsense, I deny it, or rather I agree completely; and exactly because it is hackneyed, the originality of my talent will shine all the more. I am going to view the subject in an entirely new light, which has occurred to no one before. I am going to awaken pity for Mephistopheles. Gretchen shall only be placed on the picture in order to foil his satanic beauty by her insipid charms. Do you grasp my idea, Bertrand?'

'Not quite,' said Laniche, with a yawn. 'But where are you to procure your insipid Gretchen and your satanic Mephisto? Models don't grow on trees. And how about Faust? Is he to be allowed a hand in the business?'

'He may loom in the background,' said Jérôme, striding up and down the room under the pressure of inspiration. 'I shall give him a crouching and watchful attitude, something panther-like, you know. It would be quite new, no one has thought of it yet. Then I shall require an altar, and a great many flowers, —heaps of flowers, freshness and innocence, you know.'

'And a spinning-wheel?' suggested Laniche, 'and a couple of thousand francs or so worth of jewels?'

'No, the spinning-wheel is exploded. I should like best to seat Gretchen at a patent Howe double lockstitch sewing-machine, but that might be thought eccentric. I shall give her an instrument instead, perhaps the Zither.'

'I never heard that she played it,' said Laniche.

'So much the better, all the more original; besides, you never heard she did not, did you?'

Laniche acknowledged the truth of this remark.

‘And as for the background,’ continued Jérôme, ‘that question must still be weighed. I am still hesitating between a thunder-cloud sky and a slight eclipse of the sun. The eclipse would be more uncommon, but we are short of black paint, and the thunder-clouds would certainly come cheaper, as they would carry off all that indigo which remained over from my last Harem picture.’

Laniche threw back his head, and burst into a peal of laughter.

‘You had better advertise a course of lectures upon practical economy,’ he said. ‘I undertake to paste the placards.’

‘Laugh to your heart’s content,’ responded Jérôme, ‘the duck’s back is not more indifferent to water than I am to your levity. A great change has come over me; from the moment that my Mephistopheles and Gretchen flashed into my mind my views of life have become serious. And now I am off to procure my models; I have my eye on a Gretchen already; let me hope to find you in a more congenial spirit when I return; and by-the-by, do you happen to have any loose francs about you? Unless they see silver they will not believe I am serious.’

‘I have not, but Monsieur Leegold has,’ answered Laniche with admirable coolness, ‘and no doubt he will favour you with the loan of them.’

‘I am afraid I can scarcely afford——’ I began nervously.

‘Pardon, Monsieur,’ said Laniche, whose presence of mind never forsook him. ‘I made a mistake in using the word *loan*; but you have no doubt overlooked the fact that we have made no charge as yet for materials used; it was an oversight on my part, but twenty francs will cover it. The use of the India-rubber is included.’

I was no match for Monsieur Laniche; the twenty francs were transferred from my pocket to that of Jérôme, who, snatching up a hat, which, by-the-by, was mine, went off in search of his models.

The idea may seem far-fetched, but it really has occurred to me once or twice that Jérôme might have been reclaimable. It is true that he carried the germ of almost every vice within him; but something still plastic in his nature left room for hope. In Laniche, on the contrary, everything was too deeply ingrained to be uprooted. They trod the same path, or rather the same by-ways; but the course of life which Jérôme pursued with a song on his lips and a laugh in his eyes was followed by Laniche in a far more deep and earnest, and, if I may say so, more business-like manner. The pursuit of amusement was to him a more serious question, vice to him a more profound study than to Jérôme.

It was two days after this conversation that, arriving at the studio in the morning, I found to my amazement the door standing wide open, and the place empty. The inner door was open also, disclosing two mattresses on the ground, and various articles of clothing strewn about; but of my masters there was no trace. In some alarm I questioned the washerwoman who lived downstairs, and from her I learnt that late last night a letter had been brought to the two painters, the contents of which had seemed to rejoice them exceedingly; and that immediately after receiving it they had left the house, *de très bonne humeur*, and had not been seen since.

Despondently I returned to the deserted studio and set about my work. The collection of my stray materials was more troublesome than usual, for most of the articles in the room bore an appearance of having been tossed up into the air and caught again, or not caught, as might happen; and joining what I knew of Jérôme's disposition to the *très bonne humeur* mentioned by the washerwoman, I did not think the circumstance improbable.

It was a sultry June day, which bade fair to end in a thunderstorm, and by the time I had worked for an hour the perspiration was standing on my forehead. I pushed open the window, and, taking off my coat, leant out to breathe the air and rest from my labours. I was no longer the indefatigable student who a month ago had entered on the path of Art. My ardour was considerably damped; I had discovered that poetry is largely adulterated with prose, and, whatever else I may not have learnt in the *atelier* of Messieurs Laniche et Fourchon, I certainly had learnt that a turn for scribbling faces on a counter does not necessarily mean that you are a Rafael in embryo; and that, though I might fairly aspire to paint signboards enough to rejoice my worthy uncle's heart, yet the higher paths of Art were not likely to open their gates at my touch.

That counter! It was not the first time that I had caught myself thinking almost sentimentally of yard-measures and linen bales, and wondering when I should again see the familiar spectacles, and hear again the familiar word '*Einbildung*.'

Of course I was free any day to turn my back on the studio, and re-enter my uncle's house; and it was not alone the idea of my irretrievable two hundred and seventy francs that kept me faithful to the accomplished artists. My unacknowledged object in coming to Paris had, after all, been stronger than the acknowledged one, and that object was still unfulfilled. In vain

had I employed every free hour in walking the streets of Paris and risking my inexperienced life at crossings; in vain had I darted after every flaxen head of hair I espied; I had caught no glimpse and heard no word of the little cousin whom I began to mourn for as dead.

To-day, as I looked out over the roofs, and counted the chimneys and the sparrows below me, something like a panic came over me as I thought how possible, even how probable it was, that I might never find her; or find her some twenty or thirty years hence, when my hair—and perhaps hers also—should be turning grey and scant; when her heart—and perhaps mine also—should be growing old and cold.

My work would not progress at all that day. Towards twelve Jérôme dashed into the room.

'*Bon jour!*' he shouted. 'Have you heard the news? My Academy picture is sold—five hundred francs! Are you in want of money? I can lend you some' (he did not, however). 'I have halved with Laniche, of course; he has just lost the last of it at roulette, and they have turned us out of the *café Filigrane*; but he is to have his *revanche* immediately.' Jérôme, as he spoke, was collecting cards on the ground.

'*Cher ami,*' he said, standing up again, and smiling one of his angelic smiles which even now I still felt so hard to resist, 'I see that you are not using your coat; mine has had a little accident with a bottle of *Château-Margaux*; it can be no inconvenience to you to lend me your garment for a couple of hours;' and before I had time to consent or refuse, my coat was on Jérôme's back.

'You have everything you need, I suppose?' he asked, apparently with a touch of remorse, as he reached the door. '*Que cherchez-vous là?*'

'I am looking for the chalk,' I answered meekly.

'*Cherchez seulement,*' said Jérôme, in a tone of pleasant encouragement, as he slammed the door behind him.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER this I fully expected to pass the day in undisturbed solitude, but to my surprise the afternoon brought a knock to the door.

'*Vous êtes Monsieur Fourchon?*' said an unknown voice sternly as I opened.

I said I was not Fourchon.

‘Who are you then? And where is he? And what do these gentlemen mean by making appointments which they do not keep?’

The stranger who had stalked past me into the room was wrapped entirely in a long dark cloak. He cast a sweeping glance of surprise and displeasure around him, and then measured me scornfully from head to foot.

‘Do you wish to speak with the artists?’ I asked. ‘If it is only a message ——’

As an answer he threw back his cloak with a stage gesture, and displayed to my dazzled gaze a costume of purple silk laced with gold.

‘*Je suis Faust*,’ he announced, sinking on to the nearest chair.

I had forgotten Jérôme’s projected picture, as unquestionably he had done himself, although he had employed half the day yesterday in measuring canvas and rubbing colours, and, as I remembered now, had even definitely engaged the models. Despairingly I asked myself what I should do with Faust. To send him away would be a risk; for there was no saying whether Jérôme, when fleeced of his last hundred francs, might not unexpectedly reappear in the studio; so all I could do was to take refuge in evasive excuses and hazy allusions to the painters’ numerous engagements.

My position was not enviable, but it was yet to become worse. Faust had not been five minutes in the room when another knock came, and Mephistopheles was introduced, looking so lean and hungry that Jérôme’s idea of awakening pity for him appeared very feasible upon near view. Mephistopheles was acquainted with the studio; he had sat here as model before, once as an Italian brigand, and once as a Turkish Pasha (I suspect that his terms were low), but Faust, who evidently considered himself as belonging to quite a different circle to the unfortunate demon, was obviously snorting with displeasure, and insinuated that his sitting at all was only by condescension for the encouragement of Art.

I was ignorant of what exact moment Jérôme had finally chosen for his illustration of the poem, and therefore did not know how many characters might yet be expected. But I was prepared for everything: peasants, soldiers, burgesses, students, and spirits—either heavenly or infernal—or even for a whole mob composed of all the earthly portions of these elements. With my eyes on the door I sat, devoutly praying for the reappearance of at least one of my masters. The models were hard to entertain; they would not talk to each other; Faust looked haughtily at Mephistopheles, and Mephistopheles looked deprecatingly at Faust. I

believe the wretch was as near starvation as is possible to a man who yet keeps on his legs; more than once I caught his eye fixed hungrily on the stale breadcrumbs with which I was cleaning my paper.

My fears with regard to the mob were groundless. The next half-hour brought only Martha, in her silken skirt and velvet bodice. This comparatively youthful female, being stout, was severely blown by the staircase, and took some time before she recovered breath enough to abuse the unpunctuality, and what she called '*le manque de tact*,' of painters. She was also much exercised in her mind as to the fate of her two tender infants, who, as far as I could gather, she had left locked up in an empty larder at home.

By degrees, and as the afternoon wore on, even Mephistopheles's patience began to give way. The three infuriated models sat in a half-circle round me, and launched invectives at my innocent head.

'I have sat to the greatest painters of Paris,' said Faust, sullenly, 'but such treatment as this is new to me. My time presses, at five I have an appointment with Monsieur Pastello; I have promised him my hand for his picture of Charles I.,' and Faust looked down tenderly at his carefully-tended white hand.

'And have you promised your little toe, or the lobe of your lovely ear, to anyone else?' inquired Martha, snappishly; glad apparently to vent her ill-humour even on a fellow-victim.

Faust merely gave her a withering glance.

'Of course we charge just the same as for a sitting,' he remarked.

'Of course,' echoed Mephistopheles, less hopefully; he was thinking probably of past experiences with regard to the punctuality of the artists' payments.

'As for me,' said Martha, giving a vicious tug to the lace on her bodice, 'if either of the *pauvres chéris* has broken its neck meanwhile, I shall ——'

'Prosecute Fourchon?' suggested Faust.

'Charge double,' finished Martha.

My efforts at pacification were vain, my apologies not believed in, my exhortations to patience not listened to. At the end of an hour Faust got up fuming, and, draping himself savagely in his long cloak, declared that he could not in conscience deprive Monsieur Pastello any longer of the hand which was to grace Charles I. Martha seemed inclined to follow suit.

'Thanks for an agreeable entertainment, *Monsieur l'artiste*,

she snorted, flouncing her petticoats at me, who, after all, was quite innocent of being an artist. 'I hope you will sleep well, with the blood of my innocent children upon your head. But *tiens*, there comes someone; I hear a step on the staircase; has Monsieur Fourchon put on slippers, that he treads so softly?'

As she spoke there was a low knock at the door. The three models rushed in a body to open, but fell back again immediately with an air of disgust.

'It is only another unfortunate,' said Faust, with a bitter laugh. 'I forgot that the picture was not complete.'

'It is only a girl,' said Martha, pettishly shrugging her shoulders. 'You had better go home again, poor child! If you have come here to sit for Monsieur Fourchon, you have come on a fool's errand, and nothing more.'

'Am I not late?' said a low voice from under the shawl, which the new-comer held cast about her head.

Though I should live to see my hundredth birthday I shall never be able to forget the electrifying effect which these four syllables produced in my soul. Millions of confusing sensations awoke into life at the sound of that voice. Without a word to anybody or a moment to reflect, I strode in between Faust and Martha, who were obscuring my sight, and in an instant, like an unmannerly ruffian that I was, I had torn aside the shawl which a tiny white hand still held together beneath the chin.

The shawl slipped to the ground, fell in a soft heap at her little feet, encased in low shoes and snowy stockings. She stood there before me in her soft blue dress, her golden plaits hanging on her shoulders, her rose-red lips parted in amazement, her blue eyes wide with wonder—the most beautiful Gretchen that painter's brush ever attempted to put to canvas. But to me no Gretchen; to me only Hilda, my long-lost, my miraculously-found cousin!

And the next thing that happened was that straightway on the spot, before the eyes of Faust, Mephisto, and Martha, I, Gustav Leegold, fell at her feet like a stone, and, seizing both her hands, called out in my native tongue—

'*Kleine Base, kleine Base!* come home again, come home again with me!'

To the three spectators, who understood not a word of what I said, it may have suggested insanity. Martha cast her eyes round the room, as if in search of water to dash over my head. But fortunately there was only varnish visible, and I suppose she shrank from using that. The six eyes upon me did not confuse

me; the surprise had quite triumphed over my bashfulness. It did not even occur to me that this demonstration, into which I had been carried headlong, must be almost as astonishing to Hilda as it was to the spectators. I had told her my secret so constantly in spirit that it almost seemed to me as if she must know it in reality.

But my ardour was rudely chilled; the *kleine Base* had a great deal more self-possession than I had. After the first moment of stupefaction, her senses seemed to recover themselves, and stepping back gracefully, she made me a low curtsy as I knelt on the floor, and replied—

‘Go home again, *mein Vetter* (my cousin)—go home again alone. If it is to fetch me you have come to Paris, then you have wasted a railway ticket.’

‘Hilda,’ I cried, rising abruptly from my kneeling posture, which had lost its point, since there remained now only the lay-figure in front of my outstretched arms, ‘Hilda, you must let me explain myself. I forgot that you did not know,’ and I made a snatch at her hand; but Hilda had stepped behind the lay figure, and her blue eyes looked at me dark and threatening across its wooden shoulder.

By this time the others had quite grasped the situation. Frenchmen have an instinctive sympathy in such cases, and though our dialogue was in German our pantomime was, I suppose, in a language which every nation understands.

‘*Voyons!*’ said Faust, whose bad humour had vanished; ‘this begins to interest me; I am glad I stayed.’

‘But I doubt whether we should stay longer,’ said Martha, torn between curiosity and sympathy. ‘They have had a quarrel, *c’est clair*, and I don’t believe they will make it up while there are so many of us in the room.’

‘On the contrary,’ retorted Faust, ‘*nous aiderons*. Bravo, *mon ami*, that is the way. When girls run away, it is only because they want to be caught. I shall help you, if you like; there are not many more tables to get behind.’

‘Go away, go away, all of you!’ I cried, stamping my foot furiously on the ground, for their presence and well-meant jokes had suddenly become unbearable to me. ‘This girl is my cousin; she will tell you so herself.’

Whether they believed me or not I do not know; but they actually went away, not without some parting shots from Faust, whom Martha, however, who evidently belonged to the match-making order of women, hurried out of the room. Mephistopheles

slunk after them. The *kleine Base* and I were alone in the garret studio.

She stood in a corner like a pouting child, the tip of her foot beat the floor. Since her first speech she had said not a word, and had appeared not even to notice when the others went.

'*Kleine Base*?' I said humbly.

'*Grosser Vetter*?' she answered defiantly.

I have been a fool all my life, *kleine Base*.'

'Well,' she replied, with her ravishing nose in the air, 'if you have nothing more novel to say I shall go.'

'No, you shall not, because I should follow you. You cannot hide from me again, now that I have found you.'

'Did you read my letter to your uncle?' she asked.

'Yes.'

'Do you remember what I threatened to do if I were searched for?'

'Indeed,' I cried, alarmed. 'I have not searched for you, that is to say, not exactly searched; it was not for that I came to Paris.'

'Then what was it you came to Paris for?' she coldly inquired.

'To become a painter. But I am sick of art, I am a fool at that as at everything else. I made a mess of it from the beginning.'

'Of your paintings?' she asked, raising her eyebrows.

'No, of my happiness, Hilda. I began by being too timid, and now I have been too bold; I never seem to get on, I make no progress.'

'You should take another master,' said Hilda, with a sweet but icy smile.

All this time she was standing at the furthest end of the studio, as far away from me as she could place herself. With her hands behind her, and her small feet crossed before her, she leant against the table, and bent her gaze earnestly downwards, as though the colour of her shoe-strings were to her by far the most interesting subject in the world.

'My masters be hanged!' I cried angrily, 'or rather let them be blest, since they have brought us together after these months of agony, to me at least I mean. But I could never have lain down in my grave without telling you that my heart is full, quite full of you alone; that there have been no flowers, and no birds, and no sunshine since you left; that I have—in short, that I have been a fool—and, *kleine Base*, will you come home now? Will you come home with me? Or are you so happy in this great Paris that you can do without those who love you?'

Hilda bent her head lower for a moment, as though to examine her shoe more closely ; there was a struggle in her face, but before I had time to ask myself what it meant, she had thrown her muslin apron over her face and burst into stormy tears.

My recollection of what followed is blissful but indistinct ; I remember only that the space between us was cleared in a moment, that my first kiss was pressed on a wet cheek, and that presently we were seated side by side on the *canapé*, on the top of I don't know how many portfolios and loose sketches, absolutely indifferent to the skeleton who sat beside us cheek by jowl, and absolutely forgetful of the lapse of time. There was so much to ask and answer, so many tears to dry, so many mysteries to be explained, that the dusk began to fall without our knowing it.

'*Bäschen, Bäschen,*' I said reproachfully, 'you might have come to my uncle, instead of flying off alone to strange countries and leaving us exposed to mortal terrors. Did you never think of coming to my uncle ?'

'I thought of it often,' she answered, squeezing up her pretty apron into an unsightly roll, 'but *you* were there, you know.'

'I? But I was your slave, I would have protected you, I would have died for you!'

'But in the meantime you were rude to me ; you went out of my way, you—oh, Gustav—how was it that you never guessed my secret ?'

'Because I am a fool, I suppose, or because I was too busy in hiding my own.'

'It must have been the same with me,' said Hilda, reflectively. 'How clever we have been, cousin ! How well we have hidden our secrets from each other ! So well, that we might never have found them again—never, never !'

'And that is why you did not come to my uncle ?'

'That is why I could not take my secret to that house, you know ; so I thought it best to go far away from everybody.'

Far away from everybody ! Helpless blockhead that I was ! It was my imbecile sheepishness, quite as much as her stepmother's stick, which had driven her far away from everybody. But then, how could I ever, unaided, have hit upon the unimaginable idea that she actually loved me ?

And then we talked of the linen shop and the uncle, of the crayfish she had not eaten, and the ant-hill I had crawled over while I watched for her. And I learnt that she had managed to get a living by her embroidery, in which she excelled, and that

once or twice her face had been used in a picture, for there was a dearth of fair heads just then among the models of the artistic world. 'But I should never have done it if I had not been so hungry,' said Hilda, with a shake of her flaxen head, 'for people in Paris are not like what they are at home, Gustav.'

'And have you sat before in this studio?' I asked with a sudden alarmed recollection of Jérôme's flippant laugh and reckless speeches.

'No, but Monsieur Fourchon has engaged me for three sittings; this was to be the first to-day.'

'And shall he be the last!' I cried vehemently. 'You cannot sit to these monsters. We have done with the studio, you and I, and done with Paris; we are going home together, *Bäschen*; to the uncle and the counter, and the yard-measure and the linen bales. Come away!'

A terror has rushed over me at the anticipation of the painters' return. What folly had possessed me to linger here so long?

And just as we rose from the sofa the door opened, and Laniche, with his hat very much on one side of his head, stood in the doorway.

'*Tiens, tiens,*' he said, '*des tourterelles!* What an agreeable surprise! Have they flown in by the window? Ah, I see'—as he came nearer—'Jérôme's insipid Gretchen; but the picture will fail; *le pauvre Méphisto* has not a chance beside her, she is not near insipid enough.'

At the sight of his flushed face and shining eyes, Hilda shrank trembling to my side.

'Good evening, Monsieur Laniche,' I said, with all the iciness I could command, 'my cousin and I are going home, so pray let us pass.'

I had drawn her hand through my arm, and made straight for the door; but Laniche, excited by drink, was not so easily got rid of.

'*Doucement!*' he said, planting himself squarely in our passage; 'I wonder who is at home here, you or I?'

'I shall show you who is master here, at any rate,' I said furiously, 'if you do not make room.'

'What for? For you to carry off the model which is to make Jérôme's name famous? *Pas si bête!*'

'She is not Jérôme's model,' I replied, attempting to push past him, 'she is my cousin and my bride.'

'*Rien que ça?*' laughed Laniche, huskily; 'I don't approve of sudden engagements; it isn't correct. Let me have a look at

her, why does she hide her face? *Ah ça!* my name is Bertrand Laniche, and ——'

He had put out his hand, as if to take her by the chin, but my self-control was at an end. My hands, which I had so often regarded as useless encumbrances, seemed suddenly to have become indispensable instruments. I did not wonder what to do with them; I felt all at once that their vocation was to knock down this insolent Parisian.

In a moment we were grappling together, and in another moment the accomplished artist lay on his back on the floor, still cursing faintly but otherwise exhausted.

'And now quick, Hilda,' I said panting, 'quick, before the other comes.'

'But you have no coat,' said Hilda, 'and it is raining.'

I remembered that my coat was on Jérôme's back, so snatching up the first piece of drapery which lay within reach, I seized Hilda by the hand and we flew down the staircase together.

Halfway down we passed Jérôme, fortunately so tipsy that he did not recognise me, and we were able to pursue our way unmolested.

As soon as we reached the street, which was dusk by this time, I hailed a fiacre and hurried my cousin into it.

There was no pursuit, and before another twenty-four hours had passed we had turned our backs for ever upon Paris and upon Art, and were kneeling at my uncle's feet and requesting his blessing.

I had one more communication from Messieurs Laniche et Fourchon; it was a bill of twenty francs for the 'Egyptian cloak,' which, in my hurry, I had snatched up in default of my coat; but I took the liberty of not paying it, and no second effort was made.

It is preserved in our house as a relic of my Paris masters, who doubtless now are gulling some other unfortunate pupil whom their good and his bad luck may have thrown in their path. As for the *Marquis*, I believe he had been invented for my especial benefit; and since he lured two hundred and seventy francs from my pocket, there is no denying that he served his purpose.

Whether Jérôme ever painted his 'Mephistopheles and Gretchen' I do not know; but I am certain he never found a model to equal the one which I carried away from Paris, and whose fairy-like beauty and angel-like qualities—but my uncle says that this also is '*Einbildung*.'

Old Mortality.

I.

THERE is a certain graveyard, looked upon on the one side by a prison, on the other by the windows of a quiet hotel; below, under a steep cliff, it beholds the traffic of many lines of rail, and the scream of the engine and the shock of meeting buffers mount to it all day long. The aisles are lined with the inclosed sepulchres of families, door beyond door, like houses in a street; and when by chance a door stands open, there is none to greet the visitor. In the morning the shadow of the prison turrets, and of many tall memorials, fall upon the graves. There, in the hot fits of youth, I came to be unhappy. Pleasant incidents are woven with my memory of the place. I here made friends with a certain plain old gentleman, a visitor on sunny mornings, gravely cheerful, who, with one eye upon the place that awaited him, chirped about his youth like winter sparrows; a beautiful housemaid of the hotel once, for some days together, dumbly flirted with me from a window and kept my wild heart flying; and once—she possibly remembers—the wise Eugenia followed me to that austere inclosure. Her hair came down, and in the shelter of the tomb my trembling fingers helped her to repair the braid. But for the most part I went there solitary and, with irrevocable emotion, pored on the names of the forgotten. Name after name, and to each the conventional attributions and the idle dates: a regiment of the unknown that had been the joy of mothers, and had thrilled with the illusions of youth, and at last, in the dim sick-room, wrestled with the pangs of old mortality. In that whole crew of the silenced there was but one of whom my fancy had received a picture; and he, with his comely, florid countenance, bewigged and habited in scarlet, and in his day combining fame and popularity, stood forth, like a taunt, among that company of phantom appellations. It was then possible to leave behind us something more explicit than these severe, monotonous, and lying epitaphs; and the thing left, the memory of a painted picture and what we call the immortality of a name, was hardly more desirable than mere oblivion. Even David Hume,

as he lay composed beneath that 'circular idea,' was fainter than a dream; and when the housemaid, broom in hand, smiled and beckoned from the open window, the fame of that bewigged philosopher melted like a rain-drop in the sea.

And yet in soberness I knew far less, and cared as little, for the housemaid as for David Hume. The interests of youth are rarely frank; his passions, like Noah's dove, come home to roost. The fire, sensibility, and volume of his own nature, that is all that he has learned to recognise. The tumultuary and grey tide of life, the empire of routine, the unrejoicing-faces of his elders, fill him with contemptuous surprise; there, also, he seems to walk among the tombs of spirits; and it is only in the course of years, and after much rubbing with his fellow-men, that he begins by glimpses to see himself from without and his fellows from within: to know his own for one among the thousand undenoted countenances of the city street, and to divine in others the throb of human agony and hope. In the meantime he will avoid the hospital doors, the pale faces, the cripple, the sweet whiff of chloroform—for there, on the most thoughtless, the pains of others are burned home; but he will continue to walk, in a divine self-pity, the aisles of the forgotten graveyard. The length of man's life, which is endless to the brave and busy, is scorned by his ambitious thought. He cannot bear to have come for so little, and to go again so wholly. He cannot bear, above all, in that brief scene, to be still idle, and, by way of cure, neglects the little that he has to do. The parable of the talent is the brief epitome of youth. To believe in immortality is one thing, but it is first needful to believe in life. Denunciatory preachers seem not to suspect that they may be taken gravely and in evil part; that young men may come to think of time as of a moment, and, with the pride of Satan, wave back the inadequate gift. Yet here is a true peril; this it is that sets them to pace the graveyard alleys and to read, with strange extremes of pity and derision, the forlorn memorials of the dead.

Books were the proper remedy: books of vivid human import, forcing upon their minds the issues, pleasures, business, importance and immediacy of that life in which they stand; books of smiling or heroic temper, to excite or to console; books of a large design, shadowing the complexity of that game of consequences to which we all sit down, the hanger-back not least. But the average sermon flees the point, disporting itself in that eternity of which we know, and need to know, so little; avoiding the bright, crowded, and momentous fields of life where destiny awaits us. Upon the average

book a writer may be silent ; he may set it down to his ill-hap that when his own youth was in the acrid fermentation, he should have fallen and fed upon the cheerless fields of Oberman. Yet to Mr. Arnold, who led him to these pastures, he still bears a grudge. The day is perhaps not far off when people will begin to count 'Moll Flanders,' ay, or the 'Country Wife,' more wholesome and more pious diet than these guide-books to consistent egotism.

But the most inhuman of boys soon wearies of the inhumanity of Oberman. And even while I still continued to be a haunter of the graveyard, I began insensibly to turn my attention to the grave-diggers, and was weaned out of myself to observe the conduct of visitors. This was dayspring, indeed, to a lad in such great darkness. Not that I began to see men, or to try to see them, from within, nor to learn charity and modesty and justice from the sight ; but still stared at them externally from the prison windows of my affectation. Once I remember to have observed two working-women with a baby, halting by a grave ; there was something monumental in the grouping, one upright carrying the child, the other with bowed face crouching by her side. A wreath of immortelles under a glass dome had thus attracted them ; and, drawing near, I overheard their judgment on that wonder. 'Eh ! what extravagance !' To a youth afflicted with the callosity of sentiment, this quaint and pregnant saying appeared merely base.

My acquaintance with grave-diggers considering its length was unremarkable. One, indeed, whom I found plying his spade in the red evening, high above Allan Water and in the shadow of Dunblane Cathedral, told me of his acquaintance with the birds that still attended on his labours ; how some would even perch about him, waiting for their prey ; and, in a true Sexton's Calendar, how the species varied with the season of the year. But this was the very poetry of the profession. The others whom I knew were somewhat dry. A faint flavour of the gardener hung about them, but sophisticated and disbloomed. They had engagements to keep, not alone with the deliberate series of the seasons, but with mankind's clocks and hour-long measurement of time. And thus there was no leisure for the relishing pinch, or the hour-long gossip, foot on spade. They were men wrapped up in their grim business ; they liked well to open long-closed family vaults, blowing in the key and throwing wide the grating, and they carried in their minds a calendar of names and dates. It would be 'in fifty-twa' that such a tomb was last opened for 'Miss Jemimy.' It was thus they

spoke of their past patients—familiarly but not without respect, like old family servants. Here is indeed a servant, whom we forget that we possess ; who does not wait at the bright table, or run at the bell's summons, but patiently smokes his pipe beside the mortuary fire, and in his faithful memory notches the burials of our race. To suspect Shakespeare in his maturity of a superficial touch, savours of paradox ; yet he was surely in error when he attributed insensibility to the digger of the grave. But perhaps it is on Hamlet that the charge should lie ; or perhaps the English sexton differs from the Scotch. The 'goodman delver,' reckoning up his years of office, might have at least suggested other thoughts. It is a pride common among sextons. A cabinet-maker does not count his cabinets, nor even an author his volumes, save when they stare upon him from the shelves ; but the grave-digger numbers his graves. He would indeed be something different from human if his solitary, open-air, and tragic labours left not a broad mark upon his mind. There, in his tranquil isle, apart from city clamour, among the cats and robins and the ancient effigies and legends of the tomb, he waits the continual passage of his contemporaries, falling like minute-drops into eternity. As they fall he counts them one by one ; and this enumeration, which was at first perhaps appalling to his soul, in the process of years and by the kindly influence of habit grows to be his pride and pleasure. There are many common stories telling how he piques himself on crowded cemeteries. But I will rather tell of the old grave-digger of Monkton, to whose unsuffering bedside the minister was summoned. He dwelt in a cottage built into the wall of the churchyard ; and through a bull's-eye pane above his bed he could see, as he lay dying, the rank grasses and the upright and recumbent stones. Dr. Laurie was, I think, a moderate : 't is certain, at least, that he took a very Roman view of deathbed dispositions ; for he told the old man that he had lived beyond man's natural years, that his life had been easy and reputable, that his family had all grown up and been a credit to his care, and that it now behoved him unregretfully to gird his loins and follow the majority. The grave-digger heard him out ; then he raised himself upon one elbow, and with the other hand pointed through the window to the scene of his life-long labours. 'Doctor,' he said, 'I ha'e laid three hunner and fower-score in that kirkyaird ; an it had been His wull,' indicating Heaven, 'I would ha'e likit weel to ha'e made out the fower hunner.' But it was not to be ; this tragedian of the fifth act had now another part to play ; and the time had come when others were to gird and carry him.

II.

I would fain strike a note that should be more heroical; but the ground of all youth's suffering, solitude, hysteria, and haunting of the grave, is nothing else than naked, ignorant selfishness. It is himself that he sees dead; those are his virtues that are forgotten; his is the vague epitaph. Pity him but the more, if pity be your cue; for where a man is all pride, vanity, and personal aspiration, he goes through fire unshielded. In every part and corner of our life, to lose oneself is to be gainer; to forget oneself is to be happy; and this poor, laughable, and tragic fool has not yet learned the rudiments; himself, giant Prometheus, is still ironed on the peaks of Caucasus. But by-and-by, his truant interests will leave that tortured body, slip abroad and gather flowers. Then shall death appear before him in an altered guise; no longer as a doom peculiar to himself, whether fate's crowning injustice or his own last vengeance upon those who fail to value him; but now as a power that wounds him far more tenderly, not without solemn compensations, taking and giving, bereaving and yet storing up.

The first step for all is to learn to the dregs our own ignoble fallibility. When we have fallen through storey after storey of our vanity and aspiration, and sit rueful in the ruins, then we begin to measure the stature of our friends: how they stand between us and our own contempt, believing in our best; how, linking us with others, and still spreading wide the influential circle, they weave us in and in with the fabric of contemporary life; and to what petty size they dwarf the virtues and the vices that appeared gigantic in our youth. So that at the last, when such a pin falls out—when there vanishes in the least breath of time one of those rich magazines of life on which we drew for our supply—when he who had first dawned upon us as a face among the faces of the city, and, still growing, came to bulk on our regard with those clear features of the loved and living man, falls in a breath to memory and shadow, there falls along with him a whole wing of the palace of our life.

III.

One such face I now remember; one such blank some half a dozen of us labour to dissemble. In his youth he was most

beautiful in person, most serene and genial by disposition ; full of racy words and quaint ideas. Laughter attended on his coming. He had the air of a great gentleman, jovial and royal with his equals, and to the poorest student gentle and attentive. Power seemed to reside in him exhaustless ; we saw him stoop to play with us, but held him marked for higher destinies ; we loved his notice ; and I have rarely had my pride more gratified than when he sat beside my father's table, my acknowledged friend. So he walked among us, both hands full of gifts, carrying with nonchalance the seeds of a most influential life.

The powers and the ground of friendship is a mystery ; but, looking back, I can discern that, in part, we loved the thing he was, for some shadow of what he was to be. For with all his beauty, power, breeding, urbanity and mirth, there was in those days something soulless in our friend. He would astonish us by sallies, witty, innocent and inhumane ; by a misapplied Johnsonian pleasantry, demolished honest sentiment ; and when his heart said better, turned away his ear. Along the lamplit streets, *Là ci darem la mano* on his lips, he went his way, a noble figure of a youth, but following vanity and incredulous of good ; and, sure enough, somewhere upon life's high seas, with his health, his hopes, his patrimony, and his self-respect, went miserably down.

From this disaster, like a spent swimmer, he came desperately ashore, bankrupt alike of money and consideration ; creeping to the family he had deserted ; with broken pinion, never more to rise. But in his face there was a light of knowledge that was new to it. Of the wounds of his body, he was never healed ; died of them gradually, with clear-eyed resignation ; of his wounded pride, we knew but from his silence. He returned to that city where he had lorded it in his ambitious youth ; lived there alone, seeing few ; striving to retrieve the irretrievable ; at times still grappling with that mortal frailty that had brought him down ; still joying in his friend's successes ; his laugh still ready but with kindlier music ; and over all his thoughts, the shadow of the unalterable law, that his youth had disavowed, and whose revenge had broken him in powder. Lastly, when his bodily evils had quite laid him low, he lay a great while dying, still without complaint, still finding interests ; to his last step, gentle, urbane, and with the will to smile.

The tale of this great failure is, to those who remained true to him, the tale of a success. In his youth he took thought for no one but himself ; when he came ashore again, his whole armada

lost, he seemed to think of none but others. Such was his tenderness for others, such his instinct of fine courtesy and pride, that of that impure passion of remorse he never breathed a syllable; even regret was rare with him, and pointed with a jest. You would not have dreamed, if you had known him then, that this was that great failure, that beacon to young men, over whose fall a whole society had hissed and pointed fingers. Often have we gone to him, red hot with our own hopeful sorrows, railing on the rose-leaves in our princely bed of life, and he would patiently give ear and wisely counsel; and it was only upon some return of our own thoughts that we were reminded what manner of man this was to whom we disembosomed: a man, by his own fault, ruined; shut out of the garden of his gifts; his whole city of hope both ploughed and salted; silently awaiting the deliverer. Then something took us by the throat; and to see him there, so gentle, patient, brave and pious, oppressed but not cast down, sorrow was so swallowed up in admiration that we could not dare to pity him. Even if the old fault flashed out again, it but awoke our wonder that, in that lost battle, he should have still the energy to fight. He had gone to ruin with a kind of kingly *abandon*, like one who condescended; but once ruined, with the lights all out, he fought as for a kingdom. Most men, finding themselves the authors of their own disgrace, but rail the louder against God or destiny. Most men, when they repent, oblige their friends to share the bitterness of that repentance. But he had held an inquest and passed sentence: *mene, mene*; and condemned himself to smiling silence. He had given trouble enough; had earned misfortune amply, and foregone the right to murmur.

Thus was our old comrade, like Samson, careless in his days of strength; but on the coming of adversity, and when that strength was gone that had betrayed him—'for our strength is weakness'—he then began to blossom and bring forth. Well, now, he is out of the fight: the burden that he bore thrown down before the great deliverer. We

'in the vast cathedral leave him;
God accept him,
Christ receive him!'

IV.

If we go now and look on these innumerable epitaphs, the pathos and the irony are strangely fled. Not to the dead, they

stand—these foolish monuments; they are pillars and legends set up to glorify the difficult but not desperate life of man. This ground is hallowed by the heroes of defeat.

I see the indifferent pass before my friend's last resting-place; pause, with a shrug of pity, marvelling that so rich an argosy had sunk. A pity, now that he is done with suffering, a pity most uncalled for, and an ignorant wonder. Before those who loved him, his memory shines like a reproach; they honour him for silent lessons; they cherish his example; and in what remains before them of their toil, still fear to be unworthy of the dead. For this proud man was one of those who prospered in the valley of humiliation;—of whom Bunyan wrote that, 'Though Christian had the hard hap to meet in the valley with Apollyon, yet I must tell you, that in former times men have met with angels here; have found pearls here; and have in this place found the words of life.'

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Madam.

BY MRS. OLIPHANT.

CHAPTER XXI.

ROSALIND spent a very restless night. She could not sleep, and the rain coming down in torrents irritated her with its ceaseless pattering. She thought, she could not tell why, of the poor people who were out in it—travellers, wayfarers, poor vagrants, such as she had seen about the country roads. What would the miserable creatures do in such a dismal night? As she lay awake in the darkness she pictured them to herself, drenched and cold, dragging along the muddy ways. No one in whom she was interested was likely to be reduced to such misery, but she thought of them, she could not tell why. She had knocked at Mrs. Trevanion's door as she came upstairs, longing to go in to say another word, to give her a kiss in her weariness. Rosalind had an ache and terrible question in her heart which she had never been able to get rid of, notwithstanding the closeness of the intercourse on the funeral day and the exuberant profession of faith to which she had given vent: 'You can do no wrong.' Her heart had cried out this protestation of faith, but in her mind there had been a terrible drawing back, like that of the wave which has dashed brilliantly upon a stony beach only to groan and turn back again, carrying everything with it. Through all this sleepless night she lay balloted between these two sensations—the enthusiasm and the doubt. Her mother! It seemed a sort of blasphemy to judge or question that highest of all human authorities—that type and impersonation of all that was best. And yet it would force itself upon her, in spite of all her holding back. Where was she going that night? Supposing the former events nothing, what, oh what, was the new-made widow going to do on the eve of her husband's funeral out in the park, all disguised and concealed in the dusk? The more Rosalind denied her doubts expression the more bitterly did that picture force itself upon her—the veiled muffled figure, the watching accomplice, and the door so stealthily opened. Without practice and knowledge and experience, who could have done all that? If Rosalind herself wanted to steal out quietly, a hundred hindrances

started up in her way. If she tried anything of the kind she knew very well that every individual whom she wished to avoid would meet her and find her out. It is so with the innocent, but with those who are used to concealment, not so. These were the things that said themselves in her mind without any consent of hers as she laboured through the night. And when the first faint sounds of waking began to be audible, a distant door opening, an indication that some one was stirring, Rosalind got up too, unable to bear it any longer. She sprang out of bed and wrapped herself in her dressing-gown, resolved to go to her mother's room and disperse all those ghosts of night. How often had she run there in childish troubles and shaken them off! That last court of appeal had never been closed to her. A kiss, a touch of the soft hand upon her head, a comforting word, had charmed away every spectre again and again. Perhaps Rosalind thought she would have the courage to speak all out, perhaps to have her doubts set at rest for ever; but even if she had not courage for that, the mere sight of Mrs. Trevanion was enough to dispel all prejudices, to make an end of all doubts. It was quite dark in the passages as she flitted across the large opening of the stairs. Downstairs in the great hall there was a spark of light, where a housemaid, kneeling within the great chimney, was lighting the fire. There was a certain relief even in this, in the feeling of a new day and life begun again. Rosalind glided like a ghost in her warm dressing-gown to Mrs. Trevanion's door. She knocked softly, but there was no reply. Little wonder at this hour of the morning; no doubt the mother was asleep. Rosalind opened the door.

There is a kind of horror of which it is difficult to give any description in the sensations of one who goes into a room expecting to find a sleeper in the safety and calm of natural repose and finds it empty, cold, and vacant. The shock is extraordinary. The certainty that the inhabitant must be there is so profound, and in a moment is replaced by an uncertainty which nothing can equal—a wild dread that fears it knows not what, but always the worst that can be feared. Rosalind went in with the soft yet confident step of a child, who knows that the mother will wake at a touch, almost at a look, and turn with a smile and a kiss to listen, whatever the story that is brought to her may be. Fuller confidence never was. She did not even look before going straight to the bedside. She had indeed knelt down there before she found out. Then she sprang to her feet again with the cry of

one who has touched death unawares. It was like death to her, the touch of the cold, smooth linen, all folded as it had been in preparation for the inmate—who was to sleep there no more. She looked round the room as if asking an answer from every corner. 'Mother, where are you? Mother! Where are you, mother?' she cried with a wild voice of astonishment and dismay.

There was no light in the room; a faint paleness to show the window, a silence that was terrible, an atmosphere as of death itself. Rosalind flew half frantic into the dressing-room adjoining, which for some time past had been occupied by Jane. There a night-light which had been left burning flickered feebly on the point of extinction. The faint light showed the same vacancy—the bed spread in cold order, everything empty, still. Rosalind felt her senses giving way. Her impulse was to rush out through the house, calling, asking, Where were they? Death seemed to be in the place—death more mysterious and more terrible than that with which she had been made familiar. After a pause she left the room and hurried breathless to that occupied by her uncle. How different there was the atmosphere, charged with human breath, warm with occupation. She burst in, too terrified for thought.

'Uncle John!' she cried, 'Uncle John!' taking him by the shoulder.

It was not easy to wake him out of his deep sleep. At last he sat up in his bed half awake, and looked at her with consternation.

'Rosalind! what is the matter?' he cried.

'Mamma is not in her room—where is she, where is she?' the girl demanded, standing over him like a ghost in the dark.

'Your mother is not——? I—I suppose she's tired, like all the rest of us,' he said, with a sleepy desire to escape this premature awakening. 'Why, it's dark still, Rosalind. Go back to bed, my dear. Your mother——'

'Listen, Uncle John. Mamma is not in her room. No one has slept there to-night; it is all empty; my mother—is gone, is gone! Where has she gone?' the girl cried wildly. 'She has not been there all night.'

'Good God!' John Trevanion cried. He was entirely roused now. 'Rosalind, you must be making some mistake.'

'There is no mistake. I thought perhaps you might know something. No one has slept there to-night. Oh, Uncle John, Uncle John, where is my mother? Let us go and find her before everybody knows.'

'Rosalind, leave me, and I will get up. I can tell you nothing—yes, I can tell you something; but I never thought it would be like this. It is your father who has sent her away.'

'Papa!' the girl cried; 'oh, Uncle John, stop before you have taken everything away from me: neither father nor mother!—you take everything from me!' she said, with a cry of despair.

'Go away,' he said, 'and get dressed, Rosalind, and then we can see whether there is anything to be done.'

An hour later they stood together by the half-kindled fire in the hall. John Trevanion had gone through the empty rooms with his niece, who was distracted, not knowing what she did. By this time a pale and grey daylight, which looked like cold and misery made visible, had diffused itself through the great house. That chill visibleness, showing all the arrangements of the room prepared for rest and slumber, where nobody had slept, had something terrible in it that struck them both with awe. There was no letter, no sign to be found of leave-taking. When they opened the wardrobe and drawers, a few dresses and necessities were found to be gone, and it appeared that Jane had sent two small boxes to the village which she had represented to be old clothes, 'coloured things,' for which her mistress would now have no need. It was to Rosalind like a blow in the dark, a buffet from some ghostly hand, additional to her other pain, when she found it was these 'coloured things' and not the prepared newly made mourning which her stepmother had taken with her. This seemed a cutting off from them, an entire abandonment, which made her misery deeper; but naturally John Trevanion did not think of that. He told her the story of the will while they stood together in the hall. But he could think of nothing to do, nor could he give any hope that this terrible event was a thing to be undone or concealed. 'It must have happened,' he said, 'sooner or later; and though it is a shock—a great shock——'

'Oh, Uncle John, it is—there was never anything so terrible. How can you use ordinary words? A shock! If the wind had blown down a tree it would be a shock. Don't you see, it is the house that has been blown down? we have nothing, nothing to shelter us, we children. My mother and my father! We are orphans, and far, far worse than orphans. We have nothing left but shame—nothing but shame!'

'Rosalind, it is worse for the others than for you. You at least are clear of it; she is not your mother.'

'She is all the mother I have ever known,' Rosalind cried for

the hundredth time. 'And,' she added, with quivering lips, 'I am the daughter of the man who on his death-bed has brought shame upon his own, and disgraced the wife that was like an angel to him. If the other could be got over, that can never be got over. He did it, and he cannot undo it. And she is wicked too. She should not have yielded like that; she should have resisted—she should have refused; she should not have gone away.'

'Had she done so it would have been our duty to insist upon it,' said John Trevanion, sadly. 'We had no alternative. You will find when you think it over that this sudden going is for the best.'

'Oh, that is so easy to say when it is not your heart that is wrung, but some one else's; and how can it ever be,' cried Rosalind, with a dismal logic which many have employed before her, 'that what is all wrong from beginning to end can be for the best?'

This was the beginning of a day more miserable than words can describe. They made no attempt to conceal the calamity; it was impossible to conceal it. The first astounded and terror-stricken housemaid who entered the room spread it over the house like wildfire. Madam had gone away. Madam had not slept in her bed all night. When Rosalind, who could not rest, made one of her many aimless journeys upstairs, she heard a wail from the nurseries, and Russell, rushing out, suddenly confronted her. The woman was pale with excitement; and there was a mixture of compunction and triumph and horror in her eyes.

'What does this mean, Miss Rosalind? Tell me, for God's sake!' she cried.

It did Rosalind a little good in her misery to find herself in front of an actor in this catastrophe—one who was guilty and could be made to suffer. 'It means,' she cried, with sudden rage, 'that you must leave my mother's children at once—this very moment! My uncle will give you your wages, whatever you want, but you shall not stay here, not an hour.'

'My wages!' the woman cried, with a sort of scream; 'do I care for wages? Leave my babies, as I have brought up? Oh, never, never! You may say what you please, you that were always unnatural, that held for her instead of your own flesh and blood. You are cruel, cruel; but I won't stand it—I won't. There's more to be consulted, Miss Rosalind, than you.'

'I would be more cruel if I could—I would strike you,' cried the impassioned girl, clenching her small hands, 'if it were not a shame for a lady to do it—you, who have taken my mother from me and made me hate and despise my own father, oh, God forgive

me! And it is your doing, you miserable woman. Let me never see you again. To see you is like death to me. Go away—go away!’

‘And yet I was better than a mother to you once,’ said Russell, who had cried out and put her hand to her heart as if she had received a blow. Her heart was tender to her nursling, though pitiless otherwise. ‘I saved your life,’ she cried, beginning to weep; ‘I took you when your true mother died. You would have loved me but for that woman—that—’

Rosalind stamped her foot passionately upon the floor; she was transported by misery and wrath. ‘Do not dare to speak to me! Go away—go out of the house. Uncle John,’ she cried, hurrying to the balustrade and looking down into the hall where he stood, too wretched to observe what was going on, ‘will you come and turn this woman away?’

He came slowly upstairs at this call, with his hands in his pockets, every line of his figure expressing despondency and dismay. It was only when he came in sight of Russell, flushed, crying, and injured, yet defiant too, that he understood what Rosalind meant by the appeal. ‘Yes, it will be well that you should go,’ he said. ‘You have made mischief that never can be mended. No one in this house will ever forgive you. The best thing you can do is to go—’

‘The mischief was not my making,’ cried Russell. ‘It’s not them that tells but them that goes wrong that are to blame. And the children—there’s the children to think of—who will take care of them like me? I’d die sooner than leave the children. They’re the same as my flesh and blood. They have been in my hands since ever they were born,’ the woman cried with passion. ‘Oh, Mr. Trevanion, you that have always been known for a kind gentleman, let me stay with the children! Their mother, she can desert them, but I can’t; it will break my heart.’

‘You had better go,’ said John Trevanion, with lowering brows. At this moment Reginald appeared on the scene from another direction, pulling on his jacket in great hurry and excitement. ‘What does it all mean?’ the boy cried, full of agitation. ‘Oh, if it’s only Russell! They told me some story about— Why are you bullying Russell, Uncle John?’

‘Oh, Mr. Reginald, you’ll speak for me. You are my own boy, and you are the real master. Don’t let them break my heart,’ cried Russell, holding out her imploring hands.

‘Oh, if it’s only Russell,’ the boy cried, relieved; ‘but they said—they told me—’

Another door opened as he spoke, and Aunt Sophy, dishevelled, the grey locks falling about her shoulders, a dressing-gown huddled about her ample figure, appeared suddenly. 'For God's sake, speak low! What does it all mean? Don't expose everything to the servants, whatever it is,' she cried.

CHAPTER XXII.

PRESENTLY they all assembled in the hall—a miserable party. The door of the breakfast-room stood open, but no one went near it. They stood in a knot, all huddled together, speaking almost in whispers. Considering that everybody in the house now knew that Madam had never been in bed at all, that she must have left Highcourt secretly in the middle of the night, no precaution could have been more foolish. But Mrs. Lennox had not realised this; and her anxiety to silence scandal was extreme. She stood quite close to her brother, questioning him. 'But what do you mean? How could Reginald do it? What did he imagine? And, oh! couldn't you put a stop to it, for the sake of the family, John?'

Young Reginald stood on the other side, confused between anger and ignorance, incapacity to understand and a desire to blame some one. 'What does she mean by it?' he said. 'What did father mean by it? Was it just to make us all as wretched as possible—as if things weren't bad enough before?' It was impossible to convey to either of them any real understanding of the case. 'But how could he part the children from their mother?' said Aunt Sophy. 'She is their mother, their *mother*; not their stepmother. You forget, John; she's Rosalind's stepmother. Rosalind might have been made my ward; that would have been natural; but the others are her own. How could he separate her from her own. She ought not to have left them? Oh, how could she leave them?' the bewildered woman cried.

'If she had not done it the children would have been destitute, Sophy. It was my business to make her do it, unless she had been willing to ruin the children.'

'Not me,' cried Reginald loudly. 'He could not have taken anything from me. She might have stuck to me, and I should have taken care of her. What had she to be frightened about? I suppose,' he added after a pause, 'there would have been plenty—to keep all the children too——'

'Highcourt is not such a very large estate, Rex. Lowdean

and the rest are unentailed. You would have been much impoverished too.'

'Oh!' Reginald cried with an angry frown; but then he turned to another side of the question and continued vehemently, 'Why on earth, when she knew papa was so cranky and had it all in his power, why did she aggravate him? I think they must all have been mad together, and just tried how to spite us most!' cried the boy with a rush of passionate tears to his eyes. The house was miserable altogether. He wanted his breakfast, and he had no heart to eat it. He could not bear the solemn spying of the servants. Dorrington, in particular, would come to the door of the breakfast-room and look in with an expression of mysterious sympathy for which Reginald would have liked to kill him. 'I wish I had never come away from school at all. I wish I was not going back. I wish I were anywhere out of this,' he cried. But he did not suggest again that his mother should have 'stuck to' him. He wanted to know why somebody did not interfere; why this thing and the other was permitted to be done. 'Some one could have stopped it if they had tried,' Reginald said; and that was Aunt Sophy's opinion too.

The conclusion of all was that Mrs. Lennox left Highcourt with the children and Rosalind as soon as their preparations could be made, by way of covering as well as possible the extraordinary revolution in the house. It was the only expedient any of these distracted people could think of to throw a little illusion over Mrs. Trevanion's abrupt departure. Of course they were all aware everything must be known. What is there that is not known? And to think that a large houseful of servants would keep silent on such a piece of family history was past all expectation. No doubt it was already known through the village and spreading over the neighbourhood. 'Madam' had been caught meeting some man in the park when her husband was ill, poor gentleman! And now, the very day of the funeral, she was off with the fellow, and left all her children and everything turned upside down. The older people all knew exactly what would be said, and they knew that public opinion would think the worst, that no explanations would be allowed, that the vulgarest, grossest interpretations would be so much easier than anything else, so ready, so indisputable. She had gone away with her lover. Mrs. Lennox herself could not help thinking so in the depths of her mind, though on the surface she entertained other vague and less assured ideas. What else could explain it?

Everybody knew the force of passion, the way in which women will forsake everything, even their children, even their homes—that was comprehensible, though so dreadful. But nothing else was comprehensible. Aunt Sophy, in the depth of her heart, though she was herself an innocent woman, was not sure that John was not inventing, to shield his sister-in-law, that incredible statement about the will. She felt that she herself would say anything for the same purpose—she would not mind what it was—anything rather than that Grace, a woman they had all thought so much of, had ‘gone wrong’ in such a dreadful way. Nevertheless it was far more comprehensible that she had ‘gone wrong’ than any other explanation could be. Though she had been a woman upon whom no breath of scandal had ever come, a woman who overawed evil speakers, and was above all possibility of reproach, yet it was always possible that she might have ‘gone wrong.’ Against such hazards there could be no defence. But Mrs. Lennox was very willing to do anything to cover up the family trouble. She even went the length of speaking somewhat loudly to her own maid, in the hearing of some of the servants of the house, about Mrs. Trevanion’s ‘early start.’ ‘We shall catch her up on the way,’ Mrs. Lennox said. ‘I don’t wonder, do you, Morris, that she went by that early train? Poor dear! I remember when I lost my first dear husband I couldn’t bear the sight of the house and the churchyard where he was lying. But we shall catch her up,’ the kind-hearted hypocrite said, drying her eyes. As if the housemaids were to be taken in so easily! as if they did not know far more than Mrs. Lennox did, who thus lent herself to a falsehood! When the children came down, dressed in their black frocks, with eyes wide open and full of eager curiosity, Mrs. Lennox was daunted by the cynical air with which Sophy, her namesake and godchild, regarded her. ‘You needn’t say anything to me about catching up mamma, for I know better,’ the child said vindictively. ‘She likes somebody else better than us, and she has just gone away.’

‘Rosalind,’ Mrs. Lennox cried in dismay, ‘I hope that woman is not coming with us, that horrible woman that puts such things into the children’s heads. I hope you have sent Russell away.’

But when the little ones were all packed in the carriage with their aunt, who could not endure to see anyone cry, there was a burst of simultaneous weeping. ‘I never love nobody but Nana. I do to nobody but Nana,’ little Johnny shouted. His little sister said nothing, but her small mouth quivered, and the piteous aspect of

her face struggling against a passion of restrained grief, was the most painful of all. Sophy, however, continued defiant. 'You may send her away, but me and Reginald will have her back again,' she said. Aunt Sophy could scarcely have been more frightened had she taken a collection of bomb-shells with her into the carriage. The absence of mamma was little to the children, who had been so much separated from her by their father's long illness; but Russell, the 'Nana' of their baby affections, had a closer hold.

With these rebellious companions, and with all the misery of the family tragedy overshadowing her, Rosalind made the journey more sadly than any of the party. At times it seemed impossible for her to believe that all the miseries that had happened were real. Was it not rather a dream from which she might awaken, and find everything as of old? To think that she should be leaving her home, feeling almost a fugitive, hastily, furtively, in order to cover the flight of one who had been her type of excellence all her life: to think that father and mother were both gone from her—gone out of her existence, painfully, miserably; not to be dwelt upon with tender grief such as others had the privilege of enduring, but with bitter anguish and shame. The wail of the children as they grew tired with the journey, the necessity of taking the responsibility of them upon herself, hushing the cries of the little ones for 'Nana,' silencing Sophy who was disposed to be impertinent, keeping the weight of the party from the too susceptible shoulders of the aunt, made a complication and interruption of her thoughts which Rosalind was too inexperienced to feel as an alleviation, and which made a fantastic mixture of tragedy and burlesque in her mind. She had to think of the small matters of the journey, and to satisfy Aunt Sophy's fears as to the impossibility of getting the other train at the junction, and the risk of losing the luggage, and to persuade her that Johnny's restlessness, his refusal to be comforted by the anxious nursery-maid, and wailing appeals for Russell, would wear off by and by as baby-heartbreaks do. 'But I have known a child fret itself to death,' Mrs. Lennox cried. 'I have heard of instances in which they would not be comforted, Rosalind; and what should we do if the child was to pine, and perhaps to die?' Rosalind, so young, so little experienced, was overwhelmed by this suggestion. She took Johnny upon her own lap, and attempted to soothe him, with a sense that she might turn out a kind of murderer if the child did not mend. It was consolatory to feel that, warmly wrapped and supported against her young bosom, Johnny got sleepy, and moaned

himself into oblivion of his troubles. But this was not so pleasant when they came to the junction, and Rosalind had to stumble out of the carriage somehow, and hurry to the waiting train with poor little Johnny's long legs thrust out from her draperies. It was at this moment, as she got out, that she saw a face in the crowd which gave her a singular thrill in the midst of his trouble. The wintry afternoon was falling into darkness, the vast noisy place was swarming with life and tumult. She had to walk a little slower than the rest on account of her burden, which she did not venture to give into other arms, in case the child should wake. It was the face of the young man whom she had met in the park—the stranger, so unlike anybody else, about whom she had been so uncomfortably uncertain whether he was or not—— But what did that matter? If he had been a prince of the blood or the lowest adventurer, what was it to Rosalind? Her mind was full of other things, and no man in the world had a right to waylay her, to follow her, to trace her movements. It made her hot and red with personal feeling in the midst of all the trouble that surrounded her. He had no right—no right; and yet the noblest lover who ever haunted his lady's window to see her shadow on the blind had no right; and perhaps, if put into vulgar words, Romeo had no right to scale that wall, and Juliet on her balcony was a forward young woman. There are things which are not to be defended by any rule, which youth excuses, nay, justifies, and to see a pair of sympathetic eyes directed towards her through the crowd—eyes that found her out amid all that multitude, touched Rosalind's heart. Somehow they made her trouble, and even the weight of her little brother, who was heavy, more easy to bear. She was weak and worn out, and this it was perhaps which made her so easily moved. But the startled sensation with which she heard a voice at her side, somewhat too low and too close, saying, 'Will you let me carry the child for you, Miss Trevanion?' whirled the softer sensation away into eddies of suspicion and dark thrills of alarm and doubt. 'Oh, no, no,' she cried, instinctively hurrying on.

'I ask nothing but to relieve you,' he said.

'Oh, thanks! I am much obliged to you, but it is impossible. It would wake him,' she said hurriedly, not looking up.

'You think me presumptuous, Miss Trevanion, and so I am; but it is terrible to see you so burdened and not be able to help.'

This made her burden so much the more that Rosalind quickened her steps, and stumbled and almost fell. 'Oh, please,'

she said, 'go away. You may mean to be kind. Oh, please go away.'

The nursery-maid, who came back at Mrs. Lennox's orders to help Rosalind, saw nothing particular to remark, except that the young lady was flushed and disturbed. But to hurry along a crowded platform with a child in your arms was enough to account for that. The maid could very well appreciate such a drawback to movement. She succeeded, with the skill of her profession, in taking the child into her own arms, and repeated Mrs. Lennox's entreaties to make haste. But Rosalind required no solicitation in this respect. She made a dart forward, and was in the carriage in a moment, where she threw herself into a seat and hid her face in her hands.

'I knew it would be too much for you,' said Aunt Sophy, soothingly. 'Oh, Thirza is used to it. I pity nurses with all my heart; but they are used to it. But you, my poor darling, in such a crowd! Did you think we should miss the train? I know what that is—to hurry along, and yet be sure you will miss it. Here, Thirza, here: we are all right: and after all there is plenty of time.' After a pause Aunt Sophy said, 'I wonder who that is looking so intently into this carriage. Such a remarkable face; but I hope he does not mean to get in here; we are quite full here. Rosalind, you look like nothing at all in that corner in your black dress. He will think the seat is vacant and come in if you don't make a little more appearance: Rosalind—Good gracious, I believe she has fainted!'

'No, Aunt Sophy.' Rosalind raised her head and uncovered her pale face. She knew that she should see that intruder looking at her. He seemed to be examining the carriages, looking for a place, and as she took her hands from her face their eyes met. There was that unconscious communication between them which betrays those who recognise each other whether they make any sign or not. Aunt Sophy gave a wondering cry.

'Why, you know him! and yet he does not take his hat off. Who is it, Rosalind?'

'I have seen him—in the village——'

'Oh, I know,' cried little Sophy, pushing forward. 'It is the gentleman. I have seen him often. He lived at the Red Lion. Don't you remember, Rosalind, the gentleman that mamma wouldn't let me——'

'Oh, Sophy, be quiet!' cried the girl. What poignant memories awoke with the words!

‘But how strange he looks,’ cried Sophy. ‘His hat down over his eyes, and I believe he has got a beard or something——’

‘You must not run on like that. I daresay it is quite a different person,’ said Aunt Sophy. ‘What made me notice him is that he has eyes exactly like little Johnny’s eyes.’

It was one of Aunt Sophy’s weaknesses that she was always finding out likenesses; but Rosalind’s mind was disturbed by another form of her original difficulty about the stranger. It might be forgiven him that he hung about her path, and even followed at a distance. It was excusable that he should ask if he could help her with the child; but having thus ventured to accost her, and having established a sort of acquaintance by being useful to her, why, when their eyes met, did he make no sign of recognition? No, he could not be a gentleman! Then Rosalind awoke with horror to find that on the very first day after all the calamities that had befallen her family she was able to discuss such a question with herself.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JOHN TREVANION remained in the empty house. It had seemed that morning as if nothing could be more miserable: but it was more miserable now, when every cheerful element had gone out of it, and not even the distant sound of a child’s voice, or Rosalind’s dress with its faint sweep of sound, was to be heard in the vacancy. After he had seen them off, he walked home through the village with a very heavy heart. In front of the little inn there was an unusual stir: a number of rustic people gathered about the front of the house, surrounding two men of an aspect not at all rustical, who were evidently questioning the slow but eager rural witnesses. ‘It must ha’ been last night as he went,’ said one. ‘I don’t know when he went,’ said another, ‘but he never come in to his supper, I’ll take my oath o’ that.’ They all looked somewhat eagerly towards John, who felt himself compelled to interfere, much as he disliked doing so. ‘What is the matter?’ he asked, and then from half a dozen eager mouths the story rushed out. ‘A gentleman’ had been living at the Red Lion for some time back. Nobody, it appeared, could make out what he wanted there; everybody (they now said) suspected him from the first. He would lie in bed all morning, and then get up towards afternoon. Nothing more was necessary to demonstrate his immorality, the guilt of the man. He went out trapesing in the woods at night, but he wasn’t no poacher, for he never

seemed to handle a gun nor know aught about it. He would turn white when anybody came in and tried a trigger, or to see if the ball was drawn. No, he wasn't no poacher: but he did always be in the woods o' night, which meant no good, the rustics thought. There were whisperings aside, and glances, as this description was given, which were not lost upon John, but his attention was occupied in the first place by the strangers, who came forward and announced that they were detectives in search of an offender, a clerk in a merchant's office, who had absconded, having squandered a considerable sum of his master's money. 'But this is an impossible sort of place for such a culprit to have taken refuge in,' John said, astounded. The chief of the two officers stepped out in front of the other, and asked if he might say a few words to the gentleman, then went on accompanying John, as he mechanically continued his way, repressing all appearance of the extraordinary commotion thus produced in his mind.

'You see, sir,' said the man, 'it's thought that the young fellow had what you may call a previous connection here.'

'Ah! was he perhaps related to some one in the village? I never heard his name.' (The name was Everard, and quite unknown to the neighbourhood)

'No, Mr. Trevanion,' said the other significantly, 'not in the village.'

'Where, then—what do you mean? What could the previous connection that brought him here be?'

The man took a pocket-book from his pocket, and produced a crumpled envelope. 'You may have seen this writing before, sir,' he said.

John took it with a thrill of pain and alarm, recognising the paper, the stamp of 'Highcourt,' torn but decipherable on the seal, and feeling himself driven to one conclusion which he would fain have pushed from him: but when he had smoothed it out with a hand which trembled in spite of himself he suddenly cried out with a start of overwhelming surprise and relief—

'Why! it is my brother's hand.'

'Your brother's,' cried the officer, with a blank look. 'You mean, sir, the gentleman that was buried yesterday?'

'My brother, Mr. Trevanion, of Highcourt. I do not know how he can have been connected with the person you seek. It must have been some accidental link. I have already told you I never heard the name.'

The man was as much confused and startled as John himself. 'If that's so,' he said, 'you have put us off the track, and I don't

know now what to do. We had heard,' he added, with a sidelong look of vigilant observation, 'that there was a lady in the case.'

'I know nothing about any lady,' said John Trevanion briefly.

'There's no trusting to village stories, sir. We were told that a lady had disappeared, and that it was more than probable——'

'As you say, village stories are entirely untrustworthy,' said John. 'I can throw no light on the subject, except that the address on the envelope (Everard, is it?) is in my brother's hand. He might, of course, have a hundred correspondents unknown to me, but I certainly never heard of this one. I suppose there is no more I can do for you, for I am anxious to get back to Highcourt. You have heard, no doubt, that the family is in deep mourning and sorrow.'

'I am very sorry, sir,' said the official, 'and distressed to have interrupted you at such a moment, but it is our duty to leave no stone unturned.' Then he lingered for a moment. 'I suppose then,' he said, 'there is no truth in the story about the lady——'

John turned upon him with a short laugh. 'You don't expect me, I hope, to answer for all the village stories about ladies,' he said, waving his hand as he went on. 'I have told you all I know.'

He quickened his pace and his companion fell back. But the officer was not satisfied, and John Trevanion went on with his mind in a dark and hopeless confusion, not knowing what extraordinary addition of perplexity was added to the question by this new piece of evidence, but feeling vaguely that it increased the darkness all around him. He had not in any way associated the stranger whom he had met on the road with his sister-in-law. He had thought it likely enough that the young man, perhaps of pretensions too humble to get admittance at Highcourt, had lingered about in foolish youthful adoration of Rosalind, which, however presumptuous it might be, was natural enough. To hear now that the young man who had presumed to do Miss Trevanion a service was a criminal in hiding made his blood boil. But his brother's handwriting threw everything into confusion. How did this connect with the rest, what light did it throw upon the imbroglio, in what way could it be connected with the disappearance of Madam? All these things surged about him vaguely as he walked, but he could make nothing coherent, no rational whole out of them. The park and the trees lay in a heavy mist. The day was not cold, but stifling, with a low sky, and heavy vapours in the air, everything around wet, sodden, dreary. Never had the long stretches of turf and

distant glades of trees seemed to him so lonely, so deserted and forsaken. There was not a movement to be seen, nobody coming by that public pathway which had been so great a grievance to the Trevanions for generations back. John, though he shared the family feeling in this respect, would have gladly now seen a village procession moving along the contested path. The house seemed to him to lie in a cold inclosure of mist and damp, abandoned by everybody, a spot on which there was a curse. But this of course was merely fanciful; and he shook off the feeling. There was pain enough involved in its recent history without the aid of imagination.

There was plenty to do, however. Mr. Trevanion's papers had to be put in order, his personal affairs wound up; and it was almost better to have no interruption in this duty, and so get over it as quickly as possible. There is something dreadful under all circumstances in fulfilling this office. To examine into the innermost recesses in which a man has kept his treasures, his most intimate possessions, the records perhaps of his affections and ambitions; to open his desk, to pull out his drawers, to turn over the letters which, perhaps, to him were sacred, never to be revealed to any eye but his own—is an office from which it is natural to shrink. The investigator feels himself a spy, taking advantage of the pathetic helplessness of the dead, their powerlessness to protect themselves. John Trevanion sat down in the library with the sense of intrusion strong upon him, yet with a certain painful curiosity too. He was afraid of discovering something. At every new harmless paper which he opened he drew a long breath of relief. The papers of recent times were few—they were chiefly on the subject of money, the investments which had been made, appeals for funds sent to him for the needs of the estate, for repairs and improvements, which it was evident Mr. Trevanion had been slow to yield to. It seemed from the letters addressed to him, that most of his business had been managed through his wife, which was a fact his brother was aware of; but somehow the constant reference to her, and the evident position assigned to her as in reality the active agency in the whole, added a curious and bewildering pang to the confusion in which all this had closed. It seemed beyond belief that this woman, who had stood by her husband so faithfully, his nurse, his adviser, his agent, his eyes and ears, should be now a sort of fugitive under the dead man's ban, separated from all she cared for in the world. John stopped in the middle of a bundle of letters to

ask himself whether he had ever known a similar case. There was nothing like it in the law reports, nothing even in those *causes célèbres* which include so many wonders. A woman with everything in her hands, her husband's business as well as his health, and the governance of her great household, suddenly turned away from it without reason given or any explanation—surely the man must have been mad, surely he must have been mad! It was the only solution that seemed possible. But then there arose before the thinker's troubled vision those scenes which had preceded his brother's death—the bramble upon her dress, the wet feet which she had avowed with—was it a certain bravado? And again, that still more dreadful moment in the park, on the eve of her husband's funeral, when he had himself seen her meet and talk with some one who was invisible in the shadow of the copse. He had seen it, there could be no question on the subject. What did it mean? He got up, feeling the moisture rise to his forehead in the conflict of his feelings; he could not sit still and go for the hundredth time over this question. What did it mean?

While he was walking up and down the library, unable to settle to any examination of those calm business papers in which no agitation was—a letter was brought to him. It bore the stamp of a post town at a short distance, and he turned it over listlessly enough, until it occurred to him that the writing was that of his sister-in-law. Madam wrote as many women write; there was nothing remarkable about her hand. John Trevanion opened the letter with excitement. It was as follows:—

‘Dear Brother John,—You may not wish me to call you so now, but I have always felt toward you so, and it still seems a link to those I have left behind to have one relationship which I may claim. There seems no reason why I should not write to you, or why I should conceal from you where I am. You will not seek to bring me back; I am safe enough in your hands. I am going out of England, but if you want to communicate with me on any subject, the bankers will always know where I am. It is, as I said, an additional humiliation in my great distress that I must take the provision my husband has made, and cannot fling it back to you indignantly as a younger woman might. I am old enough to know, and bitterly acknowledge, that I cannot hope to maintain myself; and I have others dependent on me. This necessity will always make it easy enough to find me, but I do not fear that you will wish to seek me out or bring me back.

'I desire you to know that I understand my husband's will better than anyone else, and perhaps, knowing his nature, blame him less than you will be disposed to do. When he married me I was very forlorn and miserable. I had a story, which is the saddest thing that can be said of a woman. He was generous to me then in every particular but one, but that one was very important. I had to make a sacrifice, an unjustifiable sacrifice, and a promise which was unnatural. Herein lies my fault. I have not kept that promise; I could not, it was more than flesh and blood was capable of; and I deceived him. I was always aware that if he discovered it he might, and probably would, take summary vengeance. Now he has discovered it—and he has done without ruth what he promised me to do if I broke my word to him. I deserve it, you see, though not in the way the vulgar will suppose. To them I cannot explain, and circumstances, alas, make it impossible for me to be explicit even with you. But perhaps, even in writing so much, you may be delivered from some suspicions of me which, if I read you right, you will be glad to find are not justified.

'Farewell, dear John; if we ever should meet in this world—if I should ever be cleared—I cannot tell—most likely not—my children will grow up without knowing me; but I dare not think on that subject, much less say anything. God bless them! be as much a father to them as you can, and let my Rosalind have the letter I inclose; it will do her no harm: anyhow she would not believe harm of me, even though she saw what looked like harm. Pity me a little, John. I have taken my doom quietly because I have no hope—neither in what I leave nor in what I go to is there any hope.

'GRACE TREVANION.'

This letter forced tears, such as a man is very slow to shed, to John Trevanion's eyes; but there was in reality no explanation in it, no light upon the family catastrophe, or the confusion of misery and perplexity she had left behind.

CHAPTER XXIV.

'HAVE you ever noticed in your walks, Doctor, a young fellow?—you couldn't but remark him—a sort of *primo tenore*, big eyed, pale faced—'

'All pulmonary,' said Dr. Beaton. 'I know the man you

mean. He has been hanging about for a month, more or less, with no visible object. To tell the truth——'

John Trevanion raised his hand instinctively. 'I find,' he said, interrupting with a hurried precaution, 'that he has been in hiding for some offence, and men have come after him here because of an envelope with the Highcourt stamp——'

Here Dr. Beaton began, with a face of regret yet satisfaction, to nod his head, with that offensive air of 'I knew it all the time,' which is more exasperating than any other form of remark.

'——The Highcourt stamp,' continued Trevanion peremptorily, 'and a direction written in my poor brother's hand.'

'In your brother's hand!'

'I thought I should surprise you,' John said with a grim satisfaction. 'I suppose it is according to the rules of the profession that so much time should have been let slip. I am very glad of it for my part. Whatever Reginald can have had to do with the fellow——something accidental, no doubt——it would have been disagreeable to have his name mixed up—— I saw the man myself trying to make himself agreeable to Rosalind.'

'To Miss Trevanion?' cried the Doctor with evident dismay. 'Why, I thought——'

'Oh, it was a very simple matter,' said John, interrupting again. 'He laid down some planks for her to cross the floods. And the recompense she gave him was to doubt whether he was a gentleman because he had paid her a compliment—which I must say struck me as a very modest attempt at a compliment.'

'It was a tremendous piece of presumption,' said the Doctor with Scotch warmth. 'I don't doubt Miss Rosalind's instinct was right, and that he was no gentleman. He had not the air of it in my opinion—a limp, hollow-eyed, phthisical subject.'

'But consumption does not spare even the cream of society, Doctor. It appears he must have had warning of the coming danger, for he seems to have got away.'

'I thought as much!' said Dr. Beaton. 'I never expected to see more of him after——Oh, I thought as much!'

John Trevanion eyed the Doctor with a look that was almost threatening, but he said nothing more. Dr. Beaton, too, was on the eve of departure; his occupation was gone, and his *tête-à-tête* with John Trevanion not very agreeable to either of them. But the parting was friendly on all sides. 'The Doctor do express himself very nicely,' Dorrington said when he joined the company in the housekeeper's room, after having solemnly served the two

gentlemen at dinner, 'about his stay having been agreeable and all that—just what a gentleman ought to say. There are medical men of all kinds, just as there are persons of all sorts in domestic service ; and the Doctor, he's one of the right sort.'

'And a comfort, whatever ailed one, to know there was a doctor in the house, and as you'd be right done by,' the housekeeper said, which was the general view in the servants' hall. These regions were, as may be supposed, deeply agitated. Russell, one of the most important among them, had been sent forth weeping and vituperating, and the sudden departure of the family had left the household free to make every commentary, possible and impossible. Needless to say that Madam's disappearance had but one explanation among them. In all circles the question would have been so decided by the majority ; in the servants' hall there was unanimity : no one was bold enough to make a different suggestion ; and had it been made it would have been laughed to scorn. There were various stories told about her supposed lover, and several different suppositions current. Gentlemen of different appearances had been seen about the park by different spectators, and men in careful disguises had even been admitted into the house, some were certain. That new man who came to wind the clocks ? Why should a new man have been sent ? And he had white hands, altogether unlike the hands of one who worked for his living. The young man who had lived at the Red Lion was not left out of the suspicions of the house, but he had not so important a place there as he had in the mind, for example, of Dr. Beaton, who had with grief and pain, but now not without a certain satisfaction, concluded upon his identity. The buzz and talk, and the whirl of suppositions and real or imaginary evidence, made a sort of reverberation through the house. Now and then, when doors were open and the household off their guard, which occurred not unfrequently in the extraordinary calm and leisure, the sounds of the eager voices were heard even as far as the library, in which John Trevanion sat with his papers, and sometimes elicited from him a furious message full of bitterness and wrath. 'Can't you keep your subordinates quiet and your doors shut,' he said to Dorrington, 'instead of leaving them to disturb me with their infernal clatter and gossip ?' 'I will see to it, sir,' said Dorrington with dignity ; 'but as for what goes on in the servants' hall, I 'ear it only as you 'ear it yourself, sir.' John bade the over-fine butler to go to—a personage who need not be named, to whom very fine persons go : and went on with his papers

with a consciousness of all that was being said, the flutter of endless talk which before now must have blown abroad over all the country, and the false conclusions that would be formed. He could not publish her letter in the same way—her letter, which said so much yet so little, which did not, alas, explain anything. She had accepted the burden, fully knowing what it was, not deceiving herself as to anything that was to follow; but in such a case the first sufferer is scarcely so much to be pitied as the succeeding victims, who have all the misery of seeing the martyr misconstrued and their own faith laughed at. There were times indeed when John Trevanion was not himself sure that he had any faith, and felt himself incapable of striving any longer with the weight of probability against her which she had never attempted to remove or explain.

He went through all the late Mr. Trevanion's papers without finding any light on the subject of his connection with Everard, or which could explain the fact of his letter to that person. Several letters from his bankers referred indeed to the payment of money at Liverpool, which was where the offender had lived, but this was too faint a light to be calculated upon. As the days went on, order came to a certain degree out of the confusion in John Trevanion's mind. To be suddenly turned out of the easy existence of a London bachelor about town, with his cosy chambers and luxurious club, and made to assume the head and charge of a family so tragically abandoned, was an extraordinary effort for any man. It was a thing, could he have known it beforehand, which would have made him fly to the uttermost parts of the earth to avoid such a charge; but to have no choice simplifies matters, and the mind habituates itself instinctively to what it is compelled to do. He decided after much thought that it was better the family should not return to Highcourt. In the changed circumstances, and deprived of maternal care and protection as they were, no woman about them more experienced than Rosalind, their return could not be otherwise than painful and embarrassing. He decided that they should remain with their aunt, having absolute confidence in her delighted acceptance of their guardianship. Sophy indeed was quite incapable of such a charge, but they had Rosalind, and they had the ordinary traditions by which such families are guided. They would, he thought, come to no harm. Mrs. Lennox lived in the neighbourhood of Clifton, far enough off to avoid any great or general knowledge of the family tragedy. The majority of the servants were consequently dismissed, and Highcourt, with

its windows all closed and its chimneys all but smokeless, fell back into silence, and stood amid its park and fine trees, a habitation of the dead.

It was not until he had done this that John Trevanion carried her stepmother's letter to Rosalind. He had a very agitating interview with her on the day of his arrival at the Limes, which was the suburban appellation of Sophy's house. He had to bear the artillery of anxious looks during dinner, and to avoid as he could his sister's questions, which were not over wise, as to what he had heard, and what he thought, and what people were saying; and it was not till the evening, when the children were disposed of, and Sophy herself had retired, that Rosalind, putting her hand within his arm, drew him to the small library, in which Mrs. Lennox allowed the gentlemen to 'make themselves comfortable,' as she said, tolerating tobacco. 'I know you have something to say to me, Uncle John—something that you could not say before—they all.'

'Little to say, but something to give you, Rosalind.' She recognised her stepmother's handwriting in a moment, though it was, as we have said, little remarkable, and with a cry of agitated pleasure threw herself upon it. It was a bulky letter, not like that which he had himself received, but when it was opened was found to contain a long and particular code of directions about the children, and only a small accompanying note. This Rosalind read with an eagerness which made her cheeks glow.

'My Rosalind, I am sometimes glad to think now that you are not mine, and never can have it said to you that your mother is not—as other mothers are. Sophy and little Amy are not so fortunate. You must make it up to them, my darling, by being everything to them—better than I could have been. And when people see what you are they will forget me.'

'That is not to say, my dearest, that you are to give up your faith in me. For the moment all is darkness—perhaps will always be darkness, all my life. There are cases that may occur in which I shall be able to tell you everything, but what would that matter so long as your father's prohibition stands? My heart grows sick when I think that in no case—— But we will not dwell upon that. My own (though you are not my own), remember me, love me. I am no more unworthy of it than other women are. I have written down all I can think of about the children. You will no doubt have dismissed Russell, but after a time I almost think she should be taken back, for she loves the

children. She always hated me, but she loves them. If you can persuade yourself to do it, take her back. Love is too precious to be lost. I am going away from you all very quietly, not permitting myself to reflect. When you think of me, believe that I am doing all I can to live—to live long enough to see my children again. My darling, my own child, I will not say good-bye to you, but only God bless you; and till we meet again,

Your true

MOTHER AND FRIEND.'

'My true mother,' Rosalind said, with the tears in her eyes, 'my dearest friend! Oh, Uncle John, was there ever any such misery before? Was it ever so with any woman? Were children ever made wretched like this, and forced to suffer? And why should it fall to our share?'

John Trevanion shook his head, pondering over the letter, and over the long, perfectly calm, most minute, and detailed instructions which accompanied it. There was nothing left out or forgotten in these instructions. She must have spent the night putting down every little detail—the smallest as well as the greatest. The writing of the letter to Rosalind showed a little trembling; a tear had fallen on it at one spot; but the longer paper showed nothing of the kind. It was as clear and steady as the many manuscripts from the same hand which he had looked over among his brother's papers; statements of financial operations, of farming, of improvements. She had put down all the necessary precautions to be taken for her children in the same way, noting all their peculiarities for the guidance of the young sister who was hereafter to have the charge of them. This document filled the man with the utmost wonder. Rosalind took it a great deal more easily. To her it was natural that her mother should give these instructions; they were of the highest importance to herself in her novel position, and she understood perfectly that Madam would be aware of the need of them, and that to make some provision for that need would be one of the first things to occur to her. But John Trevanion contemplated the paper from a very different point of view. That a woman so outraged and insulted as (if she were innocent) she must feel herself to be, should pause on the eve of her departure from everything dear to her, from honour and consideration, her home and her place among her peers, to write about Johnny's tendency to croup and Amy's readiness to catch cold, was to him more marvellous than almost anything that had gone before. He lingered over it,

reading mechanically all those simple directions. A woman at peace, he thought, might have done it, one who knew no trouble more profound than a child's cough or chilblains. But this woman—in the moment of her anguish—before she disappeared into the darkness of the distant world! 'I do not understand it at all,' he said as he put it down.

'Oh,' cried Rosalind, 'who could understand it? I think papa must have been mad; he must have been mad. Are not bad wills sometimes broken, Uncle John?'

'Not such a will as this. He had a right to leave his money as he pleased.'

'But if we were all to join—if we were to show the mistake, the dreadful mistake, he had made——'

'What mistake? You could prove that your stepmother was no common woman, Rosalind. A thing like this is astounding to me. I don't know how she could do it. You might prove that she had the power to make fools of you and me. But you could prove nothing more, my dear. Your father knew something more than we know. It might be no mistake; he might have very good reason. Even this letter, though it makes you cry, explains nothing, Rosalind.'

'I want nothing explained,' cried the girl. 'Do you think I have any doubt of *her*? I could not bear that she should explain—as if I did not know what she is! But, Uncle John, let us all go together to the judge that can do it, and tell him everything, and get him to break the will.'

'The judge who can do that is not to be found in Westminster, Rosalind. It must be one that sees into the heart. I believe in her too—without any reason—but to take it to law would only be to make our domestic misery a little better known.'

Rosalind looked at him with large eyes full of light and excitement. She felt strong enough to defy the world. 'Do you mean to say that whatever happens, though we could prove what we know of her, that she is the best, the best woman in the world——'

'Were she as pure as ice, as chaste as snow, there is nothing to be done. Your father does not say, because of this or that. What he says is absolute. If she continues with the children, or in communication with them, they lose everything.'

'Then let us lose everything,' cried Rosalind in her excitement; 'rather be poor and work for our bread, than lose our mother.'

John Trevanion shook his head. 'She has already chosen,' he said.

CHAPTER XXV.

RUSSELL left Highcourt in such wild commotion of mind and temper, such rage, grief, compunction, and pain, that she was incapable of any real perception of what had happened, and did not realise, until the damp air blowing in her face as she hurried across the park, sobbing and crying aloud, and scarcely able to keep herself from screaming, brought back her scattered faculties, either what it was that she had been instrumental in doing, or what she had brought upon herself. She did not now understand what it was that had happened to Madam, though she had a kind of vindictive joy, mingled with that sinking of the heart which those not altogether hardened to human suffering feel in regarding a catastrophe brought about by their means, in the thought that she had brought illimitable, irremediable harm to her mistress, whom she had always hated. She had done this whatever might come of it, and even in the thrill of her nerves that owned a human horror of this calamity, there was a fierce exhilaration of success in having triumphed over her enemy. But perhaps she had never wished, never thought of so complete a triumph. The desire of revenge, which springs so naturally in the undisciplined mind, and is so hot and reckless in its efforts to harm its object, has most generally no fixed intention, but only a vague wish to injure or rather punish; for Russell to her own consciousness was inspired by the highest moral sentiment, and meant only to bring retribution on the wicked and to open the eyes of a man who was deceived. She did not understand what had really occurred, but the fact that she had ruined her mistress was at the same time terrible and delightful to her. She did not mean so much as that: but no doubt Madam had been found out more wicked than was supposed, and her heart swelled with pride and a gratified sense of importance even while she trembled. But the consequences to herself were such as she had never foreseen, and for the moment overwhelmed her altogether. She wept hysterically as she hurried to the village, stumbling over the inequalities of the path, wild with sorrow and anger. She had meant to remain in Madam's service, though she had done all she could to destroy her. She thought nothing less than that life would go on without much visible alteration, and that she herself, because there was nobody like her, would necessarily remain with the children to whom her care was indispensable. She had

brought them all up from their birth. She had devoted herself to them, and felt her right in them almost greater than their mother's. 'My children,' she said, as the butler said 'my plate,' and the housemaid 'my grates and carpets.' She spent her whole life with them, whereas it is only a part of hers that the most devoted mother can give. The woman, though she was cruel and hard-hearted in one particular, was in this as tender and sensitive as the most gentle and feminine of women. She loved the children with passion. The idea that they could be torn away from her had never entered her mind. What would they do without her? The two little ones were delicate: they required constant care; without her own attention she felt sure they never could be 'reared': and to be driven from them at a moment's notice, without time to say good-bye! Sobs came from her breast, convulsive and hysterical, as she rushed along. 'Oh, my children!' she cried, under her breath, as if it were she who had been robbed, and who refused to be comforted. She passed some one on the way, who stopped astonished, to look after her, but whom she could scarcely see through the mist of her tears, and at last, with a great effort, subduing the passionate sounds that had been bursting from her, she hurried through the nearest corner of the village to her mother's house, and there, flinging herself down upon a chair, gave herself up to all the violence of that half artificial, half involuntary transport known as hysterics. Her mother was old, and beyond such violent emotions, but though greatly astonished she was not unacquainted with the manifestation. She got up from the big chair in which she was seated, tottering a little, and hurried to her daughter, getting hold of and smoothing out her clenched fingers. 'Dear, dear, now, what be the matter?' she said soothingly; 'Sarah, Sarah, come and look to your poor sister. What's come to her, what's come to her, the poor dear? Lord bless us, but she do look bad. Fetch a drop of brandy quick; that's the best thing to bring her round.'

When Russell had been made to swallow the brandy, and had exhausted herself and brought her mother and sister into accord with her partial frenzy, she permitted herself to be brought round. She sat up wildly while still in their hands, and stared about her as if she did not know where she was. Then she seized her mother by the arm; 'I have been sent away,' she said.

'Sent away. She's off of her head still, poor dear! Sent away, when they can't move hand nor foot without you!'

'That's not so now, mother. It's all true. I've been all the same as turned out of the house, and by her as I nursed and

thought of most of all; her as was like my very own; Miss Rosalind! Oh!' and Russell showed inclination to 'go off' again, which the assistants resisted by promptly taking possession of her two arms, and opening the hands which she would have clenched if she could.

'There now, deary; there now! don't you excite yourself. You're among them that wishes you well here.'

'Oh, I know that, mother. But Miss Rosalind, she's as good as taken me by the shoulders and put me out of the house, and took my children from me as I've brought up; and what am I to do without my babies? Oh, oh! I wish I had never been born.'

'I hope you've got your wages and board wages, and something over to make up? You ought to have that,' said the sister, who was a woman of good sense. Russell, indeed, had sufficient command of herself to nod in assent.

'And your character safe?' said the old woman. 'I will say that for you, deary, that you have always been respectable. And whatever it is that's happened, so long as it's nothing again your character, you'll get another place fast enough. I don't hold with staying too long in one family. You'd just like to stick there for ever.'

'Oh, don't speak to me about new places. My children as I've brought up! It has nothing to do with me; it's all because I told master of Madam's goings on. And he's been and put her away in his will—and right too. And Miss Rosalind, that always was unnatural, that took to that woman more than to her aunt, or me, or anyone, she jumps up to defend Madam, and "go out of the house, woman!" and stamping with her foot, and going on like a fury. And my little Master Johnny, that would never go to nobody but me! Oh, mother, I'll die of it, I'll die of it—my children that I've brought up!'

'I've told you all,' said the old woman, 'never you meddle with the quality. It can't come to no good.' She had given up her ministrations, seeing that her patient had come round, and retired calmly to her chair. 'Madam's goings on was no concern of yours. You ought to have known that. When a poor person puts herself in the way of a rich person, it's always her as goes to the wall.'

Of these maxims the mother delivered herself deliberately as she sat twirling her thumbs. The sister, who was the mistress of the cottage, showed a little more sympathy.

'As long as you've got your board wages,' she said, 'and a

some-thing' to make up. Mother's right enough, but I'll allow as it's hard to do. They're all turned topsy turvy at the Red Lion about Madam's young man—him as all this business was about.'

'What's about him?' cried Russell, for the first time with real energy raising her head.

'It turns out as he's robbed his masters in Liverpool,' said Sarah, with the perfect coolness of a rustic spectator; 'just what was to be expected; and the detectives is after him. He was here yesterday, I'll take my oath, but now he's gone, and there's none can find him. There's a reward of——'

'I'll find him,' cried Russell, springing to her feet. 'I'll track him. I'm good for nothing now in a common way. I cannot rest, I cannot settle to needlework or that sort.' She was fastening her cloak as she spoke, and tying on her bonnet. 'I've heaps of mending to do, for I never had a moment's time to think of myself, but only of them that have showed no more gratitude—My heart's broke, that's what it is—I can't settle down; but here's one thing I'm just in a humour to do—I'll track him out.'

'Lord, Lizzie! what are you thinking of it? You don't know no more than Adam what way they're gone, or aught about him.'

'And if you'll take my advice, deary,' said the old woman, 'you'll neither make nor meddle with the quality. Right or wrong, it's always the poor folk as go to the wall.'

'I'll track him, that's what I'll do. I'm just in the humour for that,' cried Russell, savagely. 'Don't stop me. What do I care for a bit of money to prove as I'm right. I'll go and I'll find them. Providence will put me on the right way. Providence 'll help me to find all that villainy out.'

'But, Lizzie! stop and have a bit to eat at least. Don't go off like that, without even a cup of tea——'

'Oh, don't speak to me about cups of tea!' Russell rushed at her mother and dabbed a hurried kiss upon her old cheek. She waved her hand to her sister, who stood open-mouthed, wondering at her, and finally rushed out in an excitement and energy which contrasted strangely with her previous prostration. The two rustic spectators stood gazing after her with consternation. 'She was always one as had no patience,' said the mother at last. 'And without a bit of dinner or a glass of beer, or anything,' said Sarah. After that they returned to their occupations and closed the cottage door.

Russell rushed forth to the railway station, which was at least a mile from the village. She was transported out of herself with

excitement, misery, a sense of wrong, a sense of remorse—all the conflicting passions which the crisis had brought. To prove to herself that her suspicions were justified about Madam was in reality as strong a motive in her mind as the fierce desire of revenge upon her mistress which drove her nearly frantic; and she had that wild confidence in chance, and indifference to reason, which are at once the strength and weakness of the uneducated. She would get on the track somehow; she would find them somehow; Madam's young man, and Madam herself. She would give him up to justice, and shame the woman for whose sake she had been driven forth. And, as it happened, Russell, taking her ticket for London, found herself in the same carriage with the man who had come in search of the stranger at the Red Lion, and acquired an amount of information and communicated a degree of zeal which stimulated the search on both sides. When they parted in town she was provided with an address to which to telegraph instantly on finding any trace of the fugitives, and flung herself upon the great unknown world of London with a faith and a virulence which were equally violent. She did not know where to go nor what to do; she had very little acquaintance with London. The Trevanions had a town house in a street near Berkeley Square, and all that she knew was the immediate neighbourhood of that dignified centre—of all places in the world least likely to shelter the fugitives. She went there, however, in her helplessness, and carried consternation to the bosom of the charwoman in charge, who took in the strange intelligence vaguely, and gaped and hoped as it wasn't true. 'So many things is said, and few of 'em ever comes true,' this philosophical observer said. 'But I've come out of the middle of it, and I know it's true, every word,' she almost shrieked in her excitement. The charwoman was a little hard of hearing. 'We'll hope as it'll all turn out lies—they mostly does,' she said. This was but one of many rebuffs the woman met with. She had spent more than a week wandering about London, growing haggard and thin; her respectable clothes growing shabby, her eyes wild—the want of proper sleep and proper food making a hollow-eyed spectre of the once smooth and dignified upper servant—when she was unexpectedly rewarded for all her pangs and exertions by meeting Jane one morning, sharply and suddenly, turning round a corner. The two women paused by a mutual impulse—and then one cried, 'What are you doing here?' and the other, grasping her firmly by the arm, 'I've caught you at last.'

‘Caught me! Were you looking for me? What do you want? Has anything happened to the children?’ Jane cried, beginning to tremble.

‘The children! how dare you take their names in your mouth, you as is helping to ruin and shame them? I’ll not let you go now I’ve got you; oh, don’t think it! I’ll stick to you till I get a policeman.’

‘A policeman to me!’ cried poor Jane, who, not knowing what mysterious powers the law might have, trembled more and more. ‘I’ve done nothing,’ she said.

‘But them as you are with has done a deal,’ cried Russell. ‘Where is that young man? Oh, I know—I know what he’s been and done. I have took an oath on my Bible that I’ll track him out. If I’m to be driven from my place and my dear children for Madam’s sake, she shall just pay for it, I can tell you. You thought I’d put up with it and do nothing, but a worm will turn. I’ve got it in my power to publish her shame, and I’ll do it. I know a deal more than I knew when I told master of her goings on. But now I’ve got you I’ll stick to you, and them as you’re with, and I’ll have my revenge,’ Russell cried, her wild eyes flaming, her haggard cheeks flushing; ‘I’ll have my revenge. Ah!’

She paused here with a cry of consternation, alarm, dismay; for she stepped out of a shop hard by, Madam herself, and laid a hand suddenly upon her arm.

‘Russell,’ she said, ‘I am sorry they have sent you away. I know you love the children.’ At this a convulsive movement passed across her face, which sent through the trembling awe-stricken woman a sympathetic shudder. They were one in this deprivation, though they were enemies. ‘You have always hated me, I do not know why: but you love the children. I would not have removed you from them. I have written to Miss Rosalind to bid her have you back when—when she is calmer. And you that have done me so much harm, what do you want with me?’ said Madam, looking with the pathetic smile which threw such a strange light upon her utterly pale face, upon this ignorant pursuer.

‘I’ve come—I’ve come’—she gasped, and then stood trembling, unable to articulate, holding herself up by the grasp she had taken with such different intentions of Jane’s arm, and gazing with her hollow eyes with a sort of fascination upon the lady whom at last she had hunted down.

‘I think she is fainting,’ Madam said. ‘Whatever she wants,

she has outdone her strength.' There was a compassion in the tone, which, in Russell's weakened state, went through and through her. Her mistress took her gently by the other arm, and led her into the shop she had just left. Here they brought her wine and something to eat, of which she had the greatest need. 'My poor woman,' said Madam, 'your search for me was vain, for Mr. John Trevanion knows where to find me at any moment. You have done me all the harm one woman could do another; what could you desire more? But I forgive you for my children's sake. Go back, and Rosalind will take you again, because you love them; and take care of my darlings, Russell,' she said, with that ineffable smile of anguish; 'say no ill to them of their mother.'

'Oh, Madam, kill me!' Russell cried.

That was the last that was seen in England of Madam Trevanion. The woman, overcome with passion, remorse, and long fasting and misery, fainted outright at her mistress's feet. And when she came to herself the lady and her maid were both gone, and were seen by her no more.

(To be continued.)

The 'Donna.'

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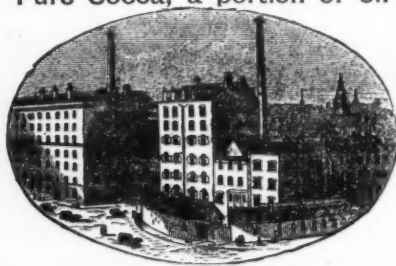
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